



IRAN FACING OTHERS

Identity Boundaries in a Historical Perspective

EDITED BY ABBAS AMANAT
AND FARZIN VEJDANI



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A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani

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To John D. Gurney

PREFACE

The study of Iranian identity poses considerable challenges ranging from the complex legacy of the premodern past to the diversity of ethnic and religious populations, from the history of encounters with multiple imperial powers to the long shadow cast by nationalist ideologies. This present volume attempts to reappraise the question of Iranian identity by engaging with more recent scholarship, including theories of nationalism, border studies, and research on identity formation.

Abbas Amanat's introduction, "Iranian Identity Boundaries: An Interpretive Overview," lays out the major issues connected with the study of Iranian identity and sets the stage for subsequent papers in the volume. Avoiding a static conception of Iran, he historicizes the multiple loci of Iranian identity, rooted in language, literature, territory, imperial traditions, myth, history, and religion.

Part I, "The Legacy of Cultural Exclusion and Contested Memories," examines notions of Iran as a bound geographical and cultural space in literature and literary histories that often excluded regions and peoples from its self-definition. The notion of Iran and *'Ajam* as geographical and imperial markers was by no means solely the product of modernity and nationalism. Nor were they, as some Iranian nationalists have argued, an eternal, continuous, and static category. A nuanced examination of Persian mytho-histories such as the *Shahnameh*, literary biographies, and early literary histories demonstrate the unstable, shifting, and dynamic meanings attributed to Iran, particularly over the period of the tenth to the twentieth centuries.

No discussion of Iranian identity can ignore the centrality and importance of Abu al-Qasem Ferdowsi's epic poem *Shahnameh* (*The Book of Kings*). Arguably more than any other Persian text, it was the *Shahnameh*, according to Dick Davis in "Iran and *Aniran*: The Shaping of a Legend," that "contributed much toward Iran's perception of the nature of its own continuing reality in the past thousand years." Although it would be tempting to see the text as conveying a singular and unified notion of Iran, Davis persuasively argues for a more nuanced reading of the poem, one that pays greater attention to the fundamentally shifting conception of Iran as a geographical boundary, the complex attitude toward presumed Others such as Turanians, Indians, Chinese, and Arabs, and the mixed genealogies of the tale's quintessentially "Iranian" figures.

While the *Shahnameh* as a poeticized mytho-historical narrative of Iranians embodied an important register of narratives and memories, *tazkerehs*, or biographical dictionaries, and later literary histories of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century were significant sites for the articulation of early modern and

modern notions of Iran. In “Redrawing the Boundaries of ‘*Ajam* in Early Modern Persian Literary Histories,” Sunil Sharma examines the processes by which ‘*Ajam*, a term implying a broader Persianate literary world, came to have a more contracted meaning in the early modern period. The tendency in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Persian biographical dictionaries to valorize “classical” Persian poets while denigrating those of the “middle” period, particularly those writing in Central Asia and South Asia, formed the immediate background for later twentieth-century nation-centered canonizations of Persian literature.

Meanwhile, in Chapter 3, titled “Iranian History in Transition: Recasting the Symbolic Identity of Babak Khorramdin,” Touraj Atabaki explores the construction of Iranian collective identity through the vector of a single event: the ninth-century revolt of the neo-Mazdakite leader, Babak Khorramdin, against the Abbasid Caliphate. He examines how modern historiographical readings of this event, including nationalist, Stalinist, regionalist, traditional Islamist, and Shi’i narratives, reflect changes in Iranian political culture. All these conflicting narratives share a highly selective approach to the revolt, one that highlights the employment of amnesia as a critical aspect of identity formation.

Part II, “Empires and Encounters,” examines how imperial encounters from the early modern period onward facilitated the articulation of an external Other through which to define a Safavid and later Qajar sense of Self. From the sixteenth century until the early twentieth century, Iranian dynasties encountered a number of foreign empires, especially the Ottomans and later the Russians and the British. All three encounters shared certain features: the loss of territory, the infiltration of foreign agents, ideological and religious competition, and anxieties over the fragility of boundaries and frontiers.

According to Fariba Zarinebaf in “Rebels and Renegades on Ottoman-Iranian Borderlands: Porous Frontiers and Hybrid Identities,” warfare, Sunni-Shi’i tensions and contested borderland regions contributed to the shaping of Ottoman-Safavid identities in the early modern period. Both Ottomans and Safavids supported dissident movements in each other’s borders: the Safavids aided Qizilbash and Celali (Jalali) rebels in the Ottoman Empire while the Ottomans in turn supported tribal groups and Christian minorities disgruntled with the Safavids’ extreme Shi’i policies. Safavid Iran consolidated its self-identity as a Shi’i state through its engagement with its main Sunni Other, the Ottoman Empire. Zarinebaf explores shifting political alliances, particularly among the Iranian-Ottoman border, where diverse populations on both sides were engaged in a constant process of refashioning themselves according to social, political, and economic circumstances.

Shifting attention to Iran’s northern border in Chapter 5, “Facing a Rude and Barbarous Neighbor: Iranian Perceptions of Russia and the Russians from the Safavids to the Qajars,” Rudi Matthee sets out to answer why Iranians’ perception of Russia failed to inspire the same intensity of sentiment as England. Focusing on Iranian perceptions of Russia, he traces the transformation of Iranian views of “Ominous Russia” (*Rus-e manhus*) from the Safavid condescension toward perceived Russian barbarity to Qajar ambivalence, wavering between awareness of Russia’s successful modernization program and fear of its military superiority and expansionist goals. Given Russia’s opaque, though somewhat brutal, imperialist agenda toward Iran, Matthee concludes that Iranian attitudes toward Russia,

although often negative, did not include a sense of dashed hopes that marked contemporary Anglo-Iranian relations.

Even more consequential in the shaping of modern Iranian national Self against an external Other was Great Britain. Abbas Amanat's "Through the Persian Eye: Anglophilia and Anglophobia in Modern Iranian History" investigates Iranian ambivalence toward England during the Qajar period. Fear and fascination permeated "diplomatic, commercial, and cultural encounters" between Iran and England. In the eyes of many Iranians, England had inexplicable powers of political intrigue and manipulation. Viewed from a longer historical perspective of cultural Othering, England came to occupy the position of an important imperial Other through which Iranian identity was partially articulated.

Continuing on the theme of Anglo-Iranian encounters in Chapter 7, H. Lyman Stebbins examines the interplay between regional, national, and imperial forces in the shaping of identities in Iran in "British Imperialism, Regionalism, and Nationalism in Iran, 1890–1919." British imperialism in the south of Iran reinforced regional identities and traditional elites but simultaneously provided a rallying point for the mobilization of local actors—including tribes, the *ulama*, and nationalists—against an external Other starting with the 1906 Iranian Constitutional Revolution. Despite the temporary and fragile alliance of local forces against the British and the later attempts by the Pahlavi state to integrate the south into the centralizing state, the issue of regionalism was an enduring source of anxiety.

Part III, "Nationalism and the Appropriation of the Past," explores the ways in which certain forms of nationalism have silenced alternative understandings of the past. Nationalism, as a foundational principle for many works of nineteenth- and twentieth-century history, often assumes an ethnically, linguistically, and religiously homogenous nation from time immemorial to the present.

In "The Academic Debate on Iranian Identity: Nation and Empire Entangled," Afshin Matin-asgari focuses the ongoing contemporary academic debate about Iran. Focusing on the latest phase of this debate from the 1990s to the present, he argues the hegemonic "Persian-National paradigm" has been increasingly challenged intellectually and politically, resulting in a crisis in orientation. He calls for less emphasis on continuities in studies of Iranian history and more critical consciousness of the ways in which Orientalists and Iranian nationalists recast imperial notions of premodern Iran within a national framework.

In Chapter 9, "Iran and Iraq: Intersocietal Linkages and Secular Nationalisms," H. E. Chehabi questions predominant narratives of an essential antagonism between Iran and Iraq, not only perpetuated by nationalists on both sides, but also replicated by less-informed pundits. In light of the Iran-Iraq war, the longest war of the twentieth century, many have overlooked or glossed over the shared communities, histories, and cultures, preferring instead to believe that the conflict between Iran and Iraq had "ancient roots." In light of these shared histories, Chehabi argues that the mutual Othering Iranians and Iraqis engage in is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Part IV, "Self-Fashioning and Internal Othering," shifts focus from the external Other to its internal analogues. While it is nearly impossible to draw strict boundaries between these two forms of Othering, the issue is one of emphasis. In Iran, the internal Other often took the form of religious minorities—Jews, Zoroastrians, and

Baha'is—who at times benefited from the integrative potential of secular nationalism but also suffered from more exclusionary ideological tendencies.

Daniel Tsadik's "Identity among the Jews of Iran" attempts to gauge the degree of Jewish integration into the broader Iranian-Muslim community from the early modern period onward. Focusing on language, conversion, persecution, iconography, and pilgrimage sites, Tsadik paints a picture of the Iranian Jewry as one occupying a liminal space, simultaneously manifesting evidence of acculturation into Iranian society while maintaining a wider identification with the international Jewish community. The advent of the 1906 Iranian Constitutional Revolution extended the hope of equality for all Iranian citizenry under the rubric of nationalism—including Jews—although this aspiration remained elusive. Throughout the rest of the twentieth century, segments of the Iranian Jewish population embraced a range of political programs (i.e., Zionism, communism, and nationalism), sought out alternative religious identities through conversion to Islam or the Baha'i faith, and attempted to negotiate their identity in light of the plethora of possibilities available to them.

Conspiracy theories and a sense of anxiety about heterodox minorities coalesced in the representation of the Baha'i community. In "*The Confessions of Dolgoruki: The Crisis of Identity and the Creation of a Master Narrative*," Mina Yazdani examines the creation of an internal Other, the Baha'is, through *The Confessions of Dolgoruki*, a forged memoir attributed to a nineteenth-century Russian diplomat, Dimitry Ivanovich Dolgorukov. The text reveals a tendency in Iranian nationalism to equate internal threats with external ones, in this case by claiming that the Babi and Baha'i movements were creations of Russian imperialism. In the course of making conspiratorial claims about supposed Baha'i links to foreign imperial powers, the text displays contradictory aims, ranging from the promotion of racist nationalism and Sunni-Shi'i rapprochement to anticlericalism. According to Yazdani, these contradictions reflect the postconstitutional identity crisis in which nationalists fused Islamist and Aryanist conceptions of the nation.

In contrast to Jews and Baha'is who were often cast as internal enemies and threats to national unity, Iranian secular nationalists often viewed Zoroastrians as repositories of Iran's "authentic" ancient past. In "Iranian Nationalism and Zoroastrian Identity: Between Cyrus and Zoroaster," Monica M. Ringer examines how Iranian Zoroastrians actively participated in promoting a unique place for themselves in Iranian nationalism. This process, however, was not without considerable ambivalence and tension. By universalizing the pre-Islamic past for the purpose of partaking in nationalism, some Iranian Zoroastrians paradoxically denuded this past of its religious significance. Iranian Zoroastrians therefore had to grapple with the question of whether they constituted a religious or an ethnic community.

Despite the considerable range of topics addressed in this edited volume, there are still important subjects that have remained unaddressed, at least independently. Foremost among them is the role of gender in the formation of Iranian identities. Another is the place of mysticism and mystical trends in Iranian Islam. Persian mystic poets and Sufi orders and convents have played a crucial role in all facets of Iranian culture, ranging from visual arts, architecture, statecraft, and popular forms of piety and culture.

The theme of this volume and many of its contributions emerged from the “Facing Others: Iranian Identity Boundaries and Modern Political Cultures” conference held April 25–27, 2008, at Yale University. Sponsored by the Iranian Studies Initiative at Yale, the conference received generous funding from the MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies. Professor Bert Fragner delivered the keynote address. Professor Ehsan Yarshater kindly agreed to participate in the conference and offered insightful concluding remarks. Presenters whose contributions are not in the present volume included Sabri Ates, Lois Beck, Stephen Dale, Manochehr Dorraj, Arash Khazeni, Orly Rahimiyan, Mahmoud Sadri, and Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi. Fakhreddin Azimi, Gene Garthwaite, Arang Keshavarzian, Kishwar Rizvi, and Farzin Vahdat graciously agreed to act as panel discussants and chairs. The editors would like to thank those who helped with various dimensions of the planning and implementation of the conference including Mehrun Etebari, Kira Gallick, John Hartley, and Ranin Kazemi. Mehrdad Amanat provided valuable feedback and comments on selected chapters.

Farzin Vejdani, 2011

INTRODUCTION

IRANIAN IDENTITY BOUNDARIES

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

ABBAS AMANAT

IN THE STORY OF ROSTAM AND SOHRAB in the *Shahnameh*, the poet Ferdowsi a millennium ago gives us a tale of a tragic quest, which contains subtle allusions to the complexities of Iranian identity.¹ Sohrab, a youth then in his early teens, questions his mother about his own identity before setting off to the land of Iran on a search for his father Rostam:

He came to his mother furiously asking her,
Tell me the truth!
How is it that I am bigger than children of my age?
That I am so tall my head touches the sky?
Whose seed am I and of what origin (*gowhar*)?
What shall I say when they ask what is my father's name?²

Sohrab is a love child of Rostam, the redoubtable champion (*pahlavan*) and king-maker of Kayanid Iran, and Tahmineh, the beautiful and wise daughter of the king of Samangan, a peripheral buffer state between Iran and Turan. A valiant warrior and like his father a giant of a man, he enters the services of the Turanid king Afrasiyab, the archenemy of Iran, who unbeknownst of Sohrab's origin furnishes him with an army. His calculated objective is to destroy Rostam at the hand of the young and formidable Sohrab. Once that is achieved, the king of Turan speculated, Sohrab too could be conveniently eliminated.

Sohrab's intention however is very different. He was to seek his father and with his help first remove the unworthy Iranian king Kay Kavus from his throne and then bring to end Afrasiyab's rule—hence reversing the course that many centuries earlier divided the people of Iran from the people of Turan. This was a seminal division in the dawn of the mythical past setting the Iranians forever apart from the “non-Iranians” (*aniran*).

When Rostam is the father, I the son,
Who else in the world should wear the crown?³

On his first sortie to Iran, having been deceived by the Iranian frontier satrap Hojir, Sohrab despite the best of his intentions is denied a chance to identify his father. Even when he points afar at Rostam's magnificent tent in the Iranian camp and inquires about the identity of the most formidable of the Iranian champions, Hojir opts not to reveal Rostam's identity, presumably knowing his misgivings about the Iranian king and the dangers of the union of the father and the son for the survival of the Iranian state. Remarkable in the making of the tragedy, Rostam too, almost deliberately, fails to identify his son Sohrab despite many circumstantial hints. Sohrab asks the formidable warrior about the legendary champion Rostam whom he is seeking. Just before engaging in a fatal one-to-one fight with Rostam, Sohrab again repeats his question:

Tell me, I have a single question,
But you must answer it in utter honesty.
I now believe you are Rostam
Who is of the house of Nariman; aren't you?
Rostam replied: "I am not Rostam,
Nor am I from the house of Sam.
For he is the champion and I am less than he,
Nor have I the throne, the crown, and the fortune."⁴

In the first round Sohrab prevails but generously spares Rostam's life once the crafty warrior manages to trick the young challenger to comply by the rules of Iranian chivalry. In the second round, however, when Rostam prevails he spares no time in thrusting his dagger at the side of Sohrab and fatally wounding him. Only then, as we are led to believe, he discovers the real identity of his victim when he sees the seal he had given to Tahmineh at the time of his departure from Samangan when Rostam urged her to fasten it on the arm of his not-yet-born son as a mark of his future identification.

The mythological (and Freudian) dimension of the tragedy aside, the Sohrab legend may also be read for its politico-cultural message. Rostam's failure to recognize his son is all the more puzzling given that he too, like Sohrab, was not from Iran proper (*Iranzamin*) but from the frontier land of Zabolestan (or Sagestan) where his family, the house of Nariman, were the autonomous rulers. His house had served the Iranian monarchy since the time of Manuchehr at moments of peril when the very survival of the Iranian state was at stake. Yet Rostam had deep misgivings toward the Iranian king, Kay Kavus, whom he viewed as erratic, deceptive, and unworthy of the Iranian throne, sentiments that later were reaffirmed in the tragedy of Siyavush.

Rostam thus could have been a potential ally to Sohrab in his desire to put an end to Kay Kavus' rule had it not been for the pressure from his fellow peers. His apparent failure to recognize Sohrab, we are told, was out of sheer bad luck or, as Ferdowsi has it, because of the dictates of blind fate. Yet in the *Shahnameh* Rostam repeatedly is praised for his sagacity and foresight: qualities that should have saved him from a tragic error of misidentification. Furthermore, his instantaneous killing of Sohrab in the second round is not compatible with Rostam's pride in upholding chivalrous valor. All these may be taken as evidence of Rostam's deceit, which made him deliberately refuse to recognize the identity of his son.

We may take Sohrab's quest as a search for identity beyond the sharp divide in the legend between Iran and "non-Iran." He is a fresh voice from the people of the periphery who, by seeking a father in Rostam, is in search of familial ties across the porous boundaries of the two lands. The state-dominated division between the Iranian Self and the non-Iranian Other came after a vengeful fratricide many mythical generations back. Of all the people, Sohrab's quest thus was nipped in the bud by his own father. As such Rostam may be seen not only as a guarantor of Iran's territorial integrity and restorer of its sovereignty but as a champion of the Iranian self-asserting identity that resists powerful personal, familial, and ethnic appeals detrimental to the very essence of a constructed Self. Rostam, it thus may be argued, had no option but to deny his own fatherly sentiments, in effect his own peripheral identity, and his son's appeal for a cross-national recognition, in order to preserve a coherent center. This center was crystallized, for better or for worse, in the Iranian state even if an unworthy ruler heads the state—one that is detested in the *Shahnameh* itself. Read in this way, the legend reflects an inherent tension in the reality of Iranian history whereby the ethnic, tribal, and denominational differences were to be subordinated, often sacrificed, through the force of the state for a larger communal identity as a whole.

NATIONAL IDENTITY AS A CONSTRUCT

Tension between the center and periphery is a familiar theme traceable through the five centuries of early modern and modern history of Iran. Starting with the state-promoted Shi'ism in the Safavid era (1501–1736) and all through to the twentieth century, the discourse of identity is a perpetual theme in Iranian history. In the Pahlavi era (1921–1979) conscious, and largely homogenizing, national identity (*hoviyyat-e melli*) relied on territorial integrity and national sovereignty as well as shared memories. As in the legend of the *Shahnameh*, here too the contingency for a state-sponsored ideology of nationalism sacrificed many peripheral expressions of diversity to legitimize the authority of the state and instill in its citizens values of pride and patriotism. Grounded in a repository of collective memories and shared symbols and experiences, the state helped shape a national identity by appropriating and misappropriating many elements from Iran's cultural past.⁵

Yet as Eric Hobsbawm notes, the process of the state imposing a national identity is a "dual phenomenon," which though "constructed essentially from above, [it] cannot be understood unless also analysed from below, that is in terms of the assumptions, hopes, needs, longings, and interests of ordinary people, which are not necessarily national and still less nationalist."⁶ Iranian identity, it can be argued, interacting with the authority of the state and its associated elites, also acquired a life of its own, somewhat independent of the sources of power and at times against the state. This was not without its historical reasons and the complex cultural ground on which Iranian identity was assembled.

It goes without saying that identity formation has not taken shape, and perhaps could not, if it was not because of encounters with neighboring communities and countries. Iranian Othering thus is not, in most ways, unique. Historically Iranians became conscious of themselves in the face of the mythical Turanids and later the historic people they came into contact with: the Greeks, Arabs, Turks, Mongols, and others. In Europe there was as much, if not more, deliberate Othering: the

English versus the French and the Irish, the French versus the English and the Germans, the Poles and Ukrainians versus the Russians. Outside Europe, there were the Vietnamese versus the Chinese and of course the Japanese versus the Chinese. Even in newer nations, the same process fully manifests itself in the Indo-Pakistani feud, India-China confrontation, Turkish-Greek hostilities, and Kurdish-Arab and Turkish-Kurdish tensions. More recent examples are the Serb-Bosnian and Serb-Croat conflicts and, even more tragic, the clan warfare in Rwanda and the ensuing genocide. We may thus confirm that nations are made, and by extension national identities made, often through hostile encounters between neighboring societies and cultures. They share commonalities but also are more sensitive to their differences.

LEGACY OF AN ANCIENT PAST

Emphasis on the role of the state as the enforcer of a collective identity made it a common practice, almost a formulaic exercise, to return to ancient roots whenever we speak of the Iranian identity. On the surface this may seem merely a vainglorious exercise sponsored by the Pahlavi state and for the benefit of its nationalist project. Yet identification with the Iranian ancient past, whether imagined or real, goes a very long way in Persian historiography and in literature and in the Iranian collective memory. One need to look at the vast number of chronicles from the tenth century such as *Tarikh-e Bal'ami* (itself based on Jarir Tabari's monumental *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa'l Muluk*). Idealization of Persian kingship as the fulcrum of state institutions in these accounts as well as in the "mirror" literature (*andarz*) portrayed methods and practices of governance to be learned by rulers of the Islamic era. Epics such as the *Shahnameh*, and their narrative of legendary dynasties, moreover, were seen as models for kingly conduct and sources of national awareness among the elite and later the nonelite.

It is important to note that for at least two and half millennia Iranians called their land Iran, even though the Avestan notion of Iran may have originally fallen outside the territorial boundaries of Iran proper. People of the Iranian plateau also shared a certain ethnic and even religious affinity with their land even though it was only from 1935 that *Iran* replaced *Persia* in Western languages as the country's nomenclature.⁷ At least since the third century CE there was a well-defined political concept, an imperial entity with a centralized authority, called *Iranshahr* (Kingdom of Iran) and located it in *Iranzamin* (the land of Iran). Etymologically *shahr* from the Middle Persian *Xshay* literary means "where the authority of the shah (i.e., the state) is current." This is a concept different from the Greek *polis* for *shahr* gives primacy to the authority of an imperial state rather than defining the city-state. Moreover whereas *shah* (from the ancient Persian *Xshayatiya*) can be rendered as the "one who is self-merited" in his royal authority, the notion of people of the kingdom (*shahrband*) in Persian was not entirely absent. The term may imply that people of Iranshahr were primarily bound (*band*) to the authority of the state. The Iranshahr of the Sasanian era no doubt was modified, if not altogether lost, after the Arab conquest of the seventh century. It was politically dismembered for many centuries within the provincial system of the Islamic caliphate and later as parts of the kingdoms of emirs and sultans of various ethnic stocks. Yet memories of Iran and Iranshahr did not entirely fade. Legends and historical chronicles as well as

poetic tradition preserved much of it in segments and episodes, scattered through a vast body of written and oral texts.⁸

It is possible to argue that the act of remembering a cultural past and identifying with its real or imagined accomplishments is particularly strong in critical junctures. During times of social upheaval when the state no longer is capable of and willing to safeguard and enforce a collective identity, memories are preserved through popular legends and poetic narrative. Despite a century or so of Umayyad hegemony (661–750) with a clear policy of Arab supremacy, people of the former provinces of Sasanian Iran, being of Iranian descent or not, remembered the pre-Islamic past. Memories of the Sasanian kings as ideal models of governance served as a subtle strategy of ethno-cultural differentiation between the Arabs, proud of their Arabian tribal ties, and their Iranian clients. Many in the service of the Umayyad and later the Abbasid caliphate further replicated institutions of Sasanian times and promoted their courtly manners and practices.

During the Samanid era (ninth and tenth centuries) in greater Khurasan and Transoxania, one of the earliest attempts to collect pre-Islamic Iranian legends was made under a local governor from the Iranian landed gentry (*dehghans*). Only the “Introduction” (*moqaddameh*) of this work, named after its patron Abu-Mansur Muhammad Tusi as Abu-Mansuri *Shahnameh*, is extant. One of the earliest examples of modern Persian prose composed in 957 and a major source for Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*, the “Introduction” to this collection of ancient narratives of Persian kings places Iranshahr within a mythological geography. The author, a first-generation Muslim whose father had converted from Zoroastrianism to Islam, locates Iranshahr at the heart of the central clime, as a vast entity that stretches from the “Oxus river” to the “Egypt river,” presumably from the Amu Darya (in today’s Uzbekistan) to the Nile. It is surrounded by the land of the Turks, China, India, Russia, Slavic lands (*Soqlab*), Byzantium (*Rum*), the land of Berbers, and Yemen.⁹

Yet the act of “Othering” toward conquerors of non-Persian origins—whether of Arab, Turkish, or Mongolian ethnicities—was often complemented with a desire to convert the new political masters to the “civilized” ways of the ancient Iranians. This was a tendency to include rather than exclude. Less than a century after the rise of the Abbasids, the decline of the institution of caliphate as a supreme religio-political authority made the alternative Persian kingship the predominant model of governance throughout the Islamic world all the way up to modern times. The idealization of the Persian kingship, that of the Khusrowian Kings (*Moluk-e Kesra*)—as the Sasanian rulers were known in Arabic and Persian literature—preoccupied the pro-Persian literati. During the heated Shu’ubiyya cultural wars in the eighth and ninth centuries these proud memories were further highlighted in response to the advocates of Arab supremacy.¹⁰

Even among those who fully absorbed the emerging Arabic-Islamic culture, memories of the Iranian past were not entirely forgotten. The narrative of the “prophets and kings” (*rusul wa’l muluk*) in classic world histories of the early Islamic period as well as in the classical Arabic *adab* literature revered the Persian legendary kings and the tradition of statecraft. Historians such as Tabari and Mas’udi recorded with accuracy the Persian political past as part of a living memory that resonated with their readers. As an inseparable part of Muslim narrative, Persian kingship contributed also in later generations to historical awareness of such

thinkers as the tenth-century Ibn Meskuya (Arabicized as Ibn Miskawahy) and the great fourteenth-century Tunisian philosopher of history 'Abd al-Rahman Ibn Khaldun. Even as late as the seventeenth century the Ottoman polyglot and scholar Avliya Kateb Chelebi was at home with the Persian royal tradition.¹¹

Among the Shu'ubiyya of Iranian descent remembrance of the pre-Islamic past was not limited to contrasting the presumed Sasanian imperial splendor with the backwardness of the Arabs of the desert. Especially at the time of crisis of the Islamic caliphate the Iranian Shu'ubiyya were often associated with skepticism, heresy, and disbelief (*elhad*): tendencies categorized under the general rubric of *zandaqa*. The freethinking trait that persisted for centuries in the Iranian milieu helped fuse elements of Manichaeism and Zorvanite heresy, even memories of the Zoroastrian past, into a broad, confused but still conscious, form of Persian identity.¹² What is more, the *zandaqa* of the Iranian Shu'ubiyya at times was linked not merely with the literati elite but with ordinary folks. Well-known anti-Shu'ubiyya authors such as Jahiz and Ibn Qutayba—the latter himself of mixed Iranian stock—were mindful of the persistence of heretical Iranian tendencies among the “inferior people” of the countryside and among the urban “riffraff.” The disparaging attitude of these authors may well speak of the persistence of a cultural awareness not only among the Iranian elite but also at the grassroots. Despite rapid Islamicization of the Iranian world and despite the predominance of Arabic “high culture,” the Persian identity of what today we may call the subaltern persisted. The Iranian revival movements of the seventh and eighth centuries and even the proto-Shi'i tendencies of periods such as the Kaysaniyya movement shared not only memories of the Iranian past but clear elements of the *zandaqa* beliefs.¹³

Revival of Persian as a literary medium further contributed to retrieving and reimagining pre-Islamic memories as it emerged in the princely courts of Khurasan and Central Asia. Evolving from the Middle Persian of the Sasanian era, the new Persian (later to be known as Farsi and Dari) exhibited great facility in adopting the Arabic script and modifying it to its own needs. It also successfully adopted Arabic technical words to enrich its vocabulary and replace older terms, at times no doubt excessively. Yet Persian barely ever lost its coherence as a language of conversation and text, both prose and poetry. It employed moreover some of the Arabic poetical techniques and meters to launch a thriving poetic tradition of its own. Some notable innovations in form and expression however harkened back to the lyrical and epic poetry of the Sasanian era.¹⁴

As a new vernacular, a hallmark of a cultural revival, Persian thrived from the ninth century onward in the local courts of Khurasan of which the Samanids and Ghaznavids are the most well known. Revived Persian generated a nostalgic sense of identity not only among the literati and the landed nobility that patronized it but among the ordinary people in cities and in the countryside. Composition of the *Shahnameh* by Abul-Qasem Ferdowsi in this cultural climate was not an accident. As “the book of the kings” it served as a model and norm for legitimizing the Samanid emirate and later the imperial Ghaznavid sultanate. For centuries afterward successive dynasties, mostly of non-Persian origins, from the Ilkhanids in the thirteenth century, the Timurid in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Ottomans in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Mughals of India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the Safavids, Afsharids, Zand, and the Qajars in Iran,

relied on the *Shahnameh* not only for its epic tales and its captivating storytelling values but as a supreme model for governance.

The blooming of Persian literature in Iran and Transoxania in the tenth and eleventh centuries did not happen in a lacuna. It came after nearly three centuries of development of colloquial Persian. While in the heydays of the Islamic caliphate Arabic prevailed as the language of the *divan* and among the religious elite, Persian first became the language of the downtrodden, the marginalized, and the minorities. It is remarkable to note that the earliest oral traces of modern Persian are to be found in popular songs and couplets preserved among the peasants, nomads, shepherds, and the people of the street. Traces of what generally is defined as *Fahlaviyat*, the Arabicized term for poems, often couplets, in dialects of the Middle Persian (Pahlavi) is evident in the Bakhtiyari, Lori and other Persian dialects of the Iranian plateau. More pronounced it is visible in the folk poetry of the eleventh-century Baba Taher of Hamadan. The earliest written specimens of Persian, moreover, going back to the eighth century, are not found in Arabic script, as one may expect, but in Judeo-Persian and Soghdian Manichean scripts. The Judeo-Persian commercial and legal documents found as far east as the Irano-Chinese frontiers and as far south as the Persian Gulf demonstrate the use of Persian local dialects among Jewish traders with a wide network stretching as far east as today's Xinxiang and as far west as Egypt.¹⁵

The shift from the humble origins of modern Persian as a language of commerce, conversation, and pastoral poetry into the language of high culture was not unexpected. In a remarkably short time Persian was capable of producing the panegyric poetry of great complexity in Khurasan of the tenth century and monumental epic romance such as the *Shahnameh*. This shift to some degree was the outcome of the fragmentation of the caliphate. Specifically it was the outcome of the patronage of the Samanids and other *dehghan* landed gentry of greater Khurasan. As a medium of communication and commerce it acquired the ability to absorb and enrich its vocabulary and its conceptual range. With its easily accessible grammatical rudiment, Persian as a language of the ordinary people was more open to linguistic democratization. Its pragmatic side served it well especially in contrast to the grammatical formidability of Arabic as an acquired language for the conquered peoples of the Islamic empire.¹⁶

Many in the Iranian lands—the people of the Persianate world (as Marshall Hodgson would define the domain of Persian culture)—came to make notable contributions to what is often defined as the “Islamic civilization” and most remarkably in Arabic language and literature.¹⁷ Elements of philosophical skepticism, Zurvanite fatalism, and Sufi stoicism can best be seen in Persian poetry from Khayyam to Hafez. Subtle reminders of a Persian identity moreover are evident in expressions of hedonistic love, homosexuality, and wine. What may be called a virtual poetic space offered a suitable environment for the survival and thriving of an alternative identity. Here the climate of the tavern (*may-khaneh*) often run by Zoroastrian, Christian, or Jewish proprietors, the brothels (*kharabat*) and nocturnal gatherings of musicians (*motreb*), singers, and dancers allowed lowly members of society with shady backgrounds defined as *rend* to mingle with the educated and the powerful. The poetic spaces offered a relatively safe haven for antinomian Persian identity to reclaim the past, often nostalgically.¹⁸ Hafez's ode (*ghazal*) recalling the now-lost camaraderie in his homeland Fars is but one example:

Friendship I no longer see, what befallen to the friends?
 When did companionship come to an end, what happened to the companions? . . .
 This was the city of friends (*shahr-e yaran*) and the land of the sun priests
 (*mehr-banan*),
 When worshipping of sun (*mehrbani*) was abandoned, where did those ruling princes
 (*shahriyaran*) go?
 Not a single gem for years came out of the mine of brotherhood,
 What happened to the sunray, to the works of the wind and the rain . . . ?
 Quiet Hafez! Who knows the secrets of the divine?
 Of whom are you asking what happened to the cycle of the Time?¹⁹

In this masterful *ghazal* Hafez seems to be lamenting the tragic fall of his beloved patron, Abu Eshaq, the prince ruler of the house of Inju. In AH 758/1357, a violent client of the Mongol Ilkhanids murdered him and brought his house to an end. The wordplay here between the “city of friends” and the “prince rulers” may well be taken as a reminder of how in Hafez’s view Persian camaraderie, specifically that of the Fars province, was tied to the institution of the state; in this case to a princely house that was indigenous to Fars.

Mention of the “fire priests” (*mehr-banan*) and the ritual of “sun worship” (*mehr-bani*) moreover should be taken as the poet’s reference to the Zoroastrian pre-Islamic past; a fire that was extinguished in Fars with the collapse of the Sasanian Empire. Hafez laments that the vitalizing ray of the sun, symbolically the Zoroastrian sun rites of the past, for long has not nurtured a gem of a hero in the “mine of brotherhood” (*kan-e morovvat*); a notion that may be taken as communal or even national solidarity. The passage of the Time and its historical cycles, he admits, is a divine mystery that cannot be fathomed by the mortals. Other *ghazals* confirms his wonder at the historical megacycles of which only remains and memories survive.

A whole body of Persian moral tales and treatises in ethics, “mirror” literature, as well as stories of the prophets and books of ascension of the Prophet (*me’raj-nameh*) further confirm a linguistic awareness of a Persian identity. A solid tradition of historiography too from the eleventh-century Abul-Fazl Bayhaqi and as late as the court chronicles of the Qajar era was instrumental in making Persian accessible to the literati and the elites. Persian never seriously attempted to compete with Arabic as a language of Islamic law and theology. To a lesser extent it delved into other areas of Islamic sciences and philosophy. Distance from formal sciences instead allowed Persian to preserve and articulate unique features, notably in epic and lyrical poetry, Sufi aphorisms, and popular storytelling.

Even Persian authors, whose chief scholarly productions were in Arabic, expressed themselves with a cultural ease evidently unencumbered with strictures of normative Islam or Arabic linguistic boundaries. This subtext of Persian identity and the place of the vernacular culture are often missed—at times conveniently—by the text-orientated field of Arabic-Islamic studies. A whole host of studies on Ibn Sina, Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazzali, Abu Rayhan Biruni, and even Nasir al-Din Tusi testifies to such embarrassing omissions of historical context. Ibn Sina’s Persian works, such as *Danesh-nameh-ye ‘Ala’i*, clearly negotiate between Persian and Arabic with some ease. Biruni’s Arabic *Athar al-Baqiya fi Qurun al-Khaliya*, a work about the remains of ancient times, reveals an almost nostalgic engagement with

the Persian past. His *al-Taḥḥīm fī Awa'il al-Sana'at al-Tanjīm*, a work on the history of astrology, also reflects similar sentiment. Both books were rendered in Arabic as well in Persian. Ghazzālī's Persian *Kīmīya-ye Sa'adat* also offers a Persian perspective. Though it is comparable to his monumental *Iḥyā al-'Ulum al-Dīn* in Arabic, the former betrays something of Ghazzālī's indigenous Iranian culture despite many years of crafting a procaliphate Sunni ideology in Baghdad and Damascus. Even his resort to Sufism and rejection of philosophical discourse signaled a return to his Khurasan origins. His correspondence in Persian reveals even better the Iranian side of this conservative scholar of Tus, especially as he articulates a strictly normative theology against the challenge of Isma'ilis of the Alamut.

Equally intriguing is the case of those who were in denial of their Iranian origin even though it is hard to believe they could have remained unaware or untouched by it through their Persian familial, urban, or regional cultures. The great ninth-century historian Muhammad Jarir Tabarī, an Arabo-Persian native of Amul in Tabarestan near the Caspian coast, is but one example. Claiming him for a broader Arabo-Islamic world, the scholarship on Tabarī often tends to dismiss his childhood and his familial links to his birthplace. Like Biruni, Tabarī's extensive coverage of Iran's pre-Islamic dynastic history, an important early Islamic source, reveals engagement with the Iranian past.

Ibn Qutayba Dinavari, another ninth-century scholar of Persian descent from the Persian-speaking city of Marv, is a more complex case. He spent much of his time as a judge in Western Iran but came to promote strong anti-Persian positions in the Shu'ubiyya debate in favor of a universal Arabic-Islamic identity. Yet even Ibn Qutayba's rejection of Persian identity did not stop him from acknowledging the civilizational heritage of the Persian pre-Islamic past and its influence in the Islamic cultural environment. The denial itself, from a sociological perspective, points at a desire to break from Persian particularism at a time when the institution of the caliphate was facing ideological and political challenges in the Iranian world as well as in the heart of the Abbasid Empire.

The Shu'ubiyya debate aside, it is important to note that Iranian learned classes embraced Arabic language, literature, and even culture of the Arabian Peninsula with a certain confidence and equanimity. Persian language quickly enriched its vocabulary corpus and incorporated Arabic verses and proverbs into Persian texts. They adopted the Arabic poetic meters and techniques and often improved on them. Stories and proverbs in Arabic, especially Bedouin pre-Islamic Arabia, along with the rich poetic tradition of the pre-Islamic era, were much appreciated. Arab legendary figures, among them Nōman ibn Mondar for his valor, Ḥatam of Tayy for his generosity and a whole host of Islamic figures for their chivalry and sacrifice are hailed in Persian poetry and prose. Such idealization of course lived side by side with negative images of the Bedouins as uncouth, ignorant, and thieves. These stereotypes were confirmed repeatedly in the course of the annual Hajj. The duality of the Arab image needless to say reflected a duality in the emerging boundaries of a cultural Iran as it distanced itself from the dominant language of the Muslim world.

With time the Iranian cultural sphere, some call it Persophonia, which was predominately Persian in its lingua franca and worldview, stretched from Anatolia through the Iranian plateau to the greater Khurasan and Transoxania (southern ridges of Central Asia) and through the Indian subcontinent.²⁰ For more than seven centuries from the Ilkhanid era up to the turn of the nineteenth century,

Persian thrived in South Asia as a language of the state, and in Iran proper and Central Asia as the language of the street. In the Indian subcontinent the Mughal court and administration, and later the princely states, promoted and patronized Persian as a language of the ruling elite. Yet through Sufi circles its domain went beyond the court. In the early eighteenth century, for instance, the translation of the Upanishads into Persian as *Serr-e Akbar* by the learned prince Darashokuh was a milestone in Hindu-Muslim cultural dialogue. Darashokuh's translation, and a few of his other works and works of others in his circle, was produced in the Sufi milieu with clear Persian philosophical and even antinomian features.

On a different but related development in the middle of the eighteenth century the revivalist Indian theologian and Sufi scholar Shah Waliullah Dehlavi produced nearly all his major literary and theological works in Persian—as did a number of historians and poets of the period from Kashmir to Bengal and down to Deccan. An unmistakable Indo-Persian flavor subdued his otherwise stringent moral message. Even in the aftermath of the 1857 Indian Revolt when the British colonial authorities finally opted for total abolishing of Persian in favor of English as the lingua franca of colonial India, Persian as a favored medium preserved its place among the Indian literati despite deliberate measures to undermine the indigenous Indo-Persian culture of India.

Persophonia, however never was, and perhaps could not have been, synonymous with Iranian identity even in its amorphous premodern world of fluid identities. Many can be identified as Persianates who shared Persian language or memories from a common cultural repository. Yet it goes without saying that textual Persian of the high culture in India and Anatolia barely corresponded to the vernacular Persian in territorial Iran or in Dari-speaking Afghanistan. And all the more because of what Iran began to experience from the beginning of the sixteenth century. Notions of Persian kingship, poetics, and literary appreciation, even Iranian myths and legends, prompted diverse emotions and claimed contesting loyalties among the Persianate peoples. Just to give one example, the Turanids of the *Shahnameh*, the arch nemesis of the Iranians, were seen by the people of Transoxania as a mythical ancestry of their Turkic stock, and hence a source of pride in contrast to the Iranian memory.

Prolonged conflicts between the Uzbeks and the Safavids since the sixteenth century further aggravated the Sunni Uzbeks' animosity toward the Iranian "Other." Increasingly Iran was associated in the Sunni eye with the Safavid movement and its propagation of the Shi'i heresy. Likewise, the Ottomans' greater awareness of their Turkic ancestry, and pride in their Turkish blood, helped to further distance the Ottomans from their Safavid neighbors on account of not only religion and language but contested memories. Rarely, however, did such sentiments diminish appreciation for works of Persian literature and their appropriation into early Ottoman canon.

CONTESTED NOTIONS OF IRAN

There is ample evidence in the Persian classical sources, both the literary works and the "mirror" literature (*andarz*, *nasihat-nameh*), confirming an awareness of Iran and *Iranzamin* (the land of Iran) as a politico-cultural entity. The pre-Islamic legacy, especially the dynastic state and the kingship tradition, is well evident despite

enormous geographical disparity and persistence of local, familial, urban, tribal, and provincial loyalties. We can locate a territorial identity not only in the legendary past but also in the praise of *Iranzamin* of the Sasanian period. It is best evident in the *Shahnameh's* mythical division between Iran and Turan—but that is not all.

Even the pre-Zoroastrian worldview, as reflected for instance in the story of Faridun, differentiates the Self and the Other along ethno-territorial lines that divides *Iran* from *aniran* (non-Iran). In Zoroastrian texts, and with a remarkable resonance later in Shi'i Islam, such differentiation carried important political implications. In the cosmic struggle between forces of the good supporting *Ahura-mazda* (the God of Wisdom) and forces of evil supporting *Ahriman*, the Iranians are naturally perceived as being on the side of the good. That meant that they had to be constantly on guard against impurities and evil pollutants that originate from the *aniran*. If left unchallenged, these alien forces were to prevail either by violent means or through deception, that would corrupt the believers' communal and individual bodies.

Etymologically, the very idea of *Iran* as the land of Aryans, it was argued, meant something as benign as “we, the kin” or “we, the cousins.” This implied kinship camaraderie based on ethnic purity of citizenry of Iran. It is not a mere coincidence, therefore, that not only in Zoroastrianism but in Shi'i Islam the notions of ritual purity versus bodily pollutants occupy a prominent place. Differentiation operated in the legal theory and practice not only in reference to things, plants, animals, and human activities but also differences between the believers and nonbelievers. Ritual “impurities” (*nejasat*) categorically embraced, and still do, all nonbelievers within and outside the pale of Shi'i community. In works of Shi'i jurisprudence the dichotomy of clean and polluted occupies a prominent place and can be seen as the most fundamental marker of Shi'i self-identification.

It may be argued moreover that encounters with other peoples and cultures, often through nomadic invasions, further helped reassert the Iranian sense of Self, albeit as a vanquished elite. Disparaging labels applied to people of Iranian stock at times reaffirmed their ethno-cultural identity. This was particularly true in the case of the Iranian “clients” (*mawali*) of the prevailing Arab overlords of Umayyad times or the Persian-speaking officeholders versus the Turkish-speaking Qizilbash in the Safavid era. They at times internalized inferiority and turned it into a rallying point to regain their lost privileges.

The ancient Greek term *barbaroi* (unintelligible or those who babble, i.e., nonspeakers of Greek) came to be predominantly applied to the Persians of the Achaemenid times to register the Greek's sense of superiority, presumably through mockery. *Barbarian* as a pejorative term thus may be seen as a propaganda strategy when people of Greek city-states encountered an imperial Persian threat superior to their own. More to the point, in modern times the term found resonance with the Europeans. Though seldom spelled out, the Greek classical reference served as a subtext to the discourse of Orientalism as a justifying ground for European hegemony. Like nearly all peoples of the non-West, the Iranians too were seen as “uncivilized” if not “barbarian” by the standard narrative of Western supremacy.

Remarkably, the Arab conquerors of the early Islamic era expressed the same linguistic condescension. They branded their Persian subordinate clients, the *mawali*, as '*Ajam* from the verb '*ajama*, denoting “he who speaks indistinctly,” in other words, “he who mumbles.” This too presumably was a mockery of Persians

inability to pronounce deep-glottal Arabic vowels. Yet unlike the Greek term, the Arabic *'ajam* survived not only as a pejorative term of reference but also as a Persian term of ethnolinguistic self-identification. As *'ajam* gradually lost its pejorative connotation, mostly after the eleventh century, the term was employed by Iranians in reference to their own ethnicity, often in contradistinction with Iran's neighboring Arabic-speaking peoples. Even as a geographical term of the Abbasid period, *'Iraq-e 'Ajam*, the northwestern provinces of the Iranian plateau east of Zagros, denoted an Iraq of the Persians that was other than the Arabic-speaking Iraq.²¹

Adding to the complexity, since the coming of the Saljuq (Seljuk) Turks to the Iranian plateau in the eleventh century, yet another ethnolinguistic marker was branded on the indigenous peoples of Iran. Here the Turkic conquerors of Central Asia, who identified themselves as *Turks*, came to refer to the Iranians—and especially to those in their administrative service—as *Tajik*, a term with an interesting etymological story of its own. *Tazhik* or *Tazik*, having been applied in Sasanian times to the tribes of northern Arabia, in modern Persian of the Islamic period was modified to *Tazi*, as for instance in the *Shahnameh*. It hence carried a subtle pejorative connotation in reference to all people of the Arabian Peninsula and implied the incursion of the marauding nomads upon sedentary population. The Persian compound verb *takht va taz* (raiding, sortie) connoted such ethnic characteristics. That the term later, as late as the sixteenth century, came to signify the indigenous Iranian element in the Safavid administration, versus the Turkmen Qizilbash military elite, implied that Iranians as *Tajiks* were seen as aliens in their own land.²²

Persian, however, did not develop a rich vocabulary to identify aliens. Besides *aniran* in the *Shahnameh*, which remained in the realm of legends, other terms were more general and relatively recent. The word *biganeh* (alien, stranger), for instance, does not connote any specific sense of territorial or ethnic otherness. It is the opposite of *yeganeh* (integrated, unified; etymologically from the word *yak* [one]) and could be used in any context ranging from the divine attribute, to a rival in love, to one unwelcome in the community. Similarly, the term *khareji* (outsider) is used more recently in reference largely to Westerners and is almost synonymous with *Farangi*, the older term for Europeans. The negative connotation of *khareji* (outsider; foreign)—rooted in the religious notion of the “one who is outside the Islamic creed” (*kharej az mazhab*)—was almost lost in the twentieth century, as it became an official term, similar to *biganeh*, to identify foreign citizens. Likewise, religious otherness was not highly developed, at least in reference to the external Other. In addition to common Islamic terms such as *kafr* (infidel) and accepted religious minorities (*ahl-e dhimma*), Shi'ism identified the Sunnis as *Nasebis* (i.e., those who stood up against the righteous creed; plural *nawasib*). The corresponding Sunni pejorative for Shi'is was *Rafidi/Rafezi* (the rejected; the apostate). All such terms were often complemented by negative attributes such as the “damned” (*mal'un*) and, more often, “polluted” (*najjes*), whereas the creed of the internal apostate was labeled as “straying” (*dalla/zalleh*), as for instance in reference to the Babi-Baha'i creed. Absence of a large vocabulary, however, can be seen as an indication of cultural inclusiveness once the boundaries of Islam and its sectarian divisions were safely crossed. In premodern Iran, the state-imposed identity was not therefore concerned as much with ethnicity, language, and even creed as with the subjects' loyalty to the authority of the sovereign.

SHI'I IDENTITY UNDER THE SAFAVIDS

Iranian communal identity nevertheless received a major boost in the Safavid era. As Shi'ism was declared the state creed and forcibly imposed on the majority population, a new layer of sociocultural identity began to take shape. Grounded in the Shi'i legitimacy claim to political power, its martyrdom narrative, and its messianic aspirations, Shi'ism became a chief marker of Iranian identity within the geographical boundaries of the Guarded Domains of Iran (*Mamalek-e Mahrusa-ye Iran*), as the Safavid Empire came to be known. Despite a vast ethnic and linguistic diversity within the Safavid territories, the state-sponsored Shi'i creed with a Persian rendering, but also an Arabic theological veneer, proved to be remarkably enduring. Not even persistence of nonnormative and nonconformist religious currents, such as the rustic religion of Ahl-e Haqq among the Kurds of Western Iran or the remnants of Sunnism in the Iranian periphery, could seriously dent the ascendancy of Shi'ism.

The idea of "guarding" as the state's most vital duty rooted in its imperial function of defending the sacred realm of the pure from the real or imagined external threats and internal sedition. It was keenly tied to the notion of preserving the "good religion" as represented by the clerical establishment and upholders of conservative orthodoxy. Articulated as early as in the Sasanian era to police public conformity and to eradicate religious dissent and diversity, by extension, the state-religion symbiosis served to homogenize the subjects and stamp on them a notion of subordination to the state. Interdependence of the state with the religious establishment persisted through the Islamic period but was fully replicated only under the Safavid state with the support of an Arabo-Persian clerical establishment that it helped nurture and patronize.²³

Forced imposition of the Shi'i shari'a predictably met with a degree of resistance from the diverse population of the newly established empire. Though in theory the state demanded the subjects to comply with its prescribed interpretation of Shi'ism, in practice it was hardly in a position to impose close surveillance of "deviant" behaviors. The means of control in the pre-twentieth-century state simply were not efficient to keep a close watch over people except by means of selective coercion of the nonconformists or by means of anti-Sunni propaganda. Yet both these means were employed with success by the Safavid state toward the goal of Shi'atization of Iran. Complemented by the growing clerical influence beyond the sphere of the state, by the nineteenth century conversion was profound enough to turn Iran into a predominantly Shi'i society.²⁴

Demonizing Sunnism and the Sunnis came at an enormous cost. The two-front Safavid Empire had to resist not only the military might of the Ottoman Empire but the destructive sorties of the Uzbeks and later Afghans in the east. Too often that meant loss of territory and loss of lives in the battlefield and massacre of the civilians. The bloody history of these conflicts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is now almost forgotten. Yet the deep impact on Safavid society was more than military. One may trace in such hostilities the origins of Shi'i isolation and its legalistic particularism. Despite porous frontiers that allowed exchange of goods and ideas with the neighboring lands and many contacts with Europe, the Safavid isolation weakened its material foundation albeit it consolidated its sense of Shi'i identity. Had it not been for Shi'ism, the Ottoman war machine most likely would have devoured at least the Western provinces of the Iranian world in the same

fashion that it vanquished the Mamluks in Syria and Egypt and annexed their territories. We may only recall the resistance of the Shi'i population of Tabriz in the face of enormous Ottoman campaigns under Solayman and his successors. Even after decades of Ottoman occupation of Western Iran, the Shi'i loyalties of the local populace barely subsided. Yet cultural isolation of the Safavid elite is well manifest in perceptions of the Europeans and the complacency that sets in by the late seventeenth century.²⁵

The trauma of the Safavid collapse in 1722 and the ensuing civil wars and political instability throughout the eighteenth century triggered a crisis of legitimacy. With it came new reflections on Iranian identity. Encounters with invading Sunni Ghelzai Afghans, and soon the occupation of vast portions of the country by Ottoman and Russian armies, shook the Shi'i-centric Iran. No less shocking was the regicide of Shah Sultan Husain, the first of an Iranian ruler by a foreign invader after many centuries. The impact is well evident for instance in the poetry of Hazin Lahiji, who serenaded from the exile of India a voice of despair about his ruined country. Even restoration of the Persian Empire under Nadir Shah (1736–47) and his arduous and bloody campaigns to reconstitute the Safavid territory did not restore long-term stability. His failed effort to reconcile Shi'ism with Sunni orthodox Islam of the four recognized schools did not restore confidence either. On the contrary it showed how deeply Shi'ism had been ingrained in the Iranian collective psyche.

The memoirs of Mohammad Khan Kalantar, the mayor of Shiraz covering six decades between the fall of the Safavids and the rise of Aqa Mohammad Khan Qajar (1785–1797), exhibits the insecurity of life and property under Nadir's tyranny. A cultured man with a sense of humor and scathing tongue, he had no compunction about showering scorn on Nadir and his lieutenants, and on an assortment of tribal warlords who periodically plundered his beloved Shiraz. Even though a sense of regional identity is palpable under Kalantar's account, he had little illusion about the return of enduring peace and prosperity even under the Zands. By the 1780s and a renewal of political turmoil, he was vexed enough with the calamities to call on Catherine the Great of Russia to relieve Iran of its misery. Yet for Kalantar, the absence of political stability does not translate into a loss of his cultural identity. He is indeed more Persian than anyone conceivable at the height of the Safavid Empire having been able to sublimate his despairs and miseries into a story of endurance shared by the people of his city and province.²⁶

EMERGENCE OF NATIONAL IDENTITY UNDER THE QAJARS

The dawn of the Qajar Dynasty was no more promising, at least not before the end of the eighteenth century. Yet Aqa Mohammad Khan, despite the terrifying image that he projected, was crucial in restoring a long-lost stability to the country. He essentially was a tribal warlord with prime loyalty to his tribe and desire for its political survival. Yet he was clearly emulating both Nadir Shah and Karim Khan Zand (1750–79) in trying to reconstitute the territorial Iran of Safavid times. To be sure he was eager to establish a royal house with the *Shahnameh* as its ideal model even though he barely aspired to the conduct of its legendary kings. He even created a Kayanid crown presumably inspired by the *Shahnameh*.²⁷

Traces of the Iranian awareness are even more visible under Fath 'Ali Shah Qajar (1797–1835). Like his uncle and predecessor, the future Fath 'Ali Shah spent his early years as ransom in the Zand court in Shiraz. This had an undeniable impact on his personality, his refined taste, and his self-image as an Iranian ruler with the adopted title of the “King of Kings” (*shahanshab*). The near total transfer to the Qajar service of the Zand *divan* nobility, itself a remnant of the Safavid era, further boosted the Perso-centric focus of the Tehran court and its political culture. Serving in high offices in Tehran as well as in provincial capitals of Tabriz, Shiraz, Kermanshah, and elsewhere the Persian officials channeled the patronage of Fath 'Ali Shah toward greater appreciation of the Persian culture and language. Even more Persianization was in effect in the provincial courts and among the princely class of that time.

Regard for cultural patronage is well evident in the creation of a royal society known as Anjoman-e Khaqan. The distinguished literati of this royal circle in Tehran and Tabriz launched a conscious literary “return” (*bazgasht*) to the Persian classical style of Khurasan of the tenth and eleventh centuries. More accurately a literary renaissance, it strived to break away from the complex poetic style of the Safavid era and its technical acrobatics. The focal point no doubt was a reconstituted cultural Iran. The *Shahanshab-nameh* of the poet laureate Fath 'Ali Khan Saba Kashani, mimicking the style of Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, should perhaps be seen as the apogee of this literary movement both in poetic skills and in imagery. Yet it also provided a telling example of anachronistic and, as it turned out, misplaced glorification of Fath 'Ali Shah on the model of ancient legends.²⁸

Production of a body of historical works further placed the new dynasty on a longer trail of the Iranian past. Some histories traced the Qajar claim to power to the end of the Safavid era and to their claim to be the Safavids' rightful heirs, hence portraying the Afsharids and the Zands as usurpers. Others traced the Qajars to a Turko-Mongolian origin and therefrom, curiously, to pre-Islamic Iran. As late as the last decades of the nineteenth century Mohammad Hasan Khan E'temad al-Saltaneh, the official chronicler of the Naser al-Din Shah era, traced the Qajar origins to no later than the Parthian Dynasty of the second century BCE. Authors of universal histories on the classical model located the new dynasty in the *longue durée* of Persian kingship. Still other chroniclers recorded the events of their time with some accuracy even though mostly with embarrassing distortions in favor of their Qajar patrons. The thrust of the Qajar historiography thus was to recreate a grand narrative in which the ruling dynasty no longer was to be overshadowed by the Safavid past. Rather, it was to be depicted as a crucial force for the political stability and coherence of the country. Homage to the Shi'i religious past nevertheless was fully acknowledged. Such works as the multivolume *Nasekh al-Tawarikh* by Mohammad Taqi Lesan al-Molk Kashani, with the pen name Sepehr, were commissioned by Naser al-Din Shah with the specific wish of producing a definitive history of early Islam and the formative age of Shi'ism. They were also aimed at eloquence and accessibility. Though incomplete, the success of Sepehr's history can be gauged through its many printed editions throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁹

Qajar projection of imperial authority employed with some success not only the epic literature of Iran and patronage of historical writings but pomp and circumstance. The dazzling appearance, large-scale portraiture, and even rock reliefs of the shah as well as elaborate protocol and etiquette were typical of the Qajar court.

Beyond Fath 'Ali Shah's vanity, such display of royal glory were meant to generate a sense of continuity even beyond Safavid times. Yet revival of ancient symbols and memories, though they allowed a fleeting sense of splendor and political confidence, proved to be badly inadequate in the face of European expansionism that soon appeared on the Iranian horizon. Defeat in two rounds of war with Russia in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, which led to the loss of coveted Caucasian provinces, was a rude intrusion into an otherwise slow reconstruction of the Qajar Guarded Domains.

The impact of the wars with Russia went beyond damaging the image of the Qajar dynasty as a capable defender of the country and the faith. Later on the two botched confrontations in 1838 and 1856 with imperial Britain over Iran's territorial claim on Herat province reaffirmed Iran's military disparity. Defeat in the hands of Christian powers, was the first in Iran's long history, perhaps since the Byzantine-Sasanian wars of the early seventh century CE. The territorial losses and their diplomatic and commercial consequences brought home a gloomy message of disempowerment not only to the elite but to the population at large. The senior Shi'i *mojtaheds*' call for jihad in defense of the homelands and its Shi'i rulers and against the Russian intruders disastrously failed. Adding to the climate of despair, an exchange of population with Russia and the arrival of many Shi'i Caucasian émigrés in place of the departing Armenian made the defeat more tangible for average Iranians.³⁰

Encounters with Christian missionaries further sharpened awareness among the clerical classes and educated laymen. A body of refutations in response to Christian polemics especially in the early part of the nineteenth century aimed to defend a threatened Islamic identity. This is well represented in the genre of "refutation of the padre" (*radd-e padri*) that first came to vogue in response to the polemics of Henry Martyn, the English Evangelical missionary who visited Iran from 1808 to 1809. In his debates with the *mojtahids* of Shiraz the Iranian critics of the jurists rather unfairly hailed Martyn as the winner.

Facing new challenges from Christian Europe and criticism at home, numerous authors from among Usuli jurists, Sufi scholars, Islamic philosophers, and lay writers produced polemical responses. These were in answer to such questions as the veracity of Mohammad's prophecy and Qur'an as his miracle. Long absent from the Shi'i theological discourse, their successful treatment at a critical juncture was a test of cultural confidence and rhetorical agility. The Iranian authors came out with mixed results. Some defenses raised doubts about the validity of arcane arguments and theological complacency. Others, including one by a renowned Usuli jurist, Mirza Abol-Qasem Qomi, and another by a Sufi scholar, Mohammad Reza Hamadani, opted for new strategies and explored novel explanations.

The posthumous publication of Martyn's Persian translation of the New Testament (with the aid of a Persian secret convert) and its wide distribution stirred new interests. This was a fresh translation and the first complete version of the New Testament in print. Published first in St. Petersburg and in Calcutta in 1815 and soon after in numerous editions in England, by the middle of the nineteenth century it was among the most widely distributed printed texts in Iran. The access to the New Testament, and later the entire Bible, opened a new window for the Persian reader to Christianity and especially to the story of Jesus. This posed a subtle contest to Islam's supremacy and offered an alternative view of Christianity and prophecy.

The Christian missionaries however never posed a serious threat to Shi'i Iran even though they were more successful with the Jewish and Armenian communities.³¹

Greater popularization of the Shi'i culture in the Qajar era, sponsored by the court and elite as well as by the preachers and professional mourners, reinforced Iran's Shi'i identity. Wider spread of *ta'ziyeh* passion plays during the month of Moharram together with mourning processions and liturgical recitations of *rowzeh-khwani* dramatized the tragedies of Karbala. Lithographic publication of mourning literature—some illustrated—and multiple-panel paintings (*pardeh*)—as aids to itinerant storytellers—further helped spread of Shi'ism as a deeply ingrained set of rites and rituals among the urban folks and villagers alike.

The state's sponsorship is best signified by the construction of the Takkiyeh-e Dawlat in the mid-1860s under Naser al-Din Shah. As a site for *ta'ziyeh* performance during Muharram, perhaps inspired by European opera houses, it housed under one massive semipermanent roof the shah and his harem, the Qajar elite, and the diplomatic corps, together with the ordinary folks of all classes including woman and children. This was a memorable event in Iran's religious calendar and was replicated on humbler scale all over the country. The actors were ordinary people of towns and villages and the urban notables, local nobility, and landlords often funded the event. The power of performance on the makeshift stages as much as the imagery of the painted panel scenes carried by itinerant dervishes were engrossing as much as they were terrifying. These were potent media, before the days of moving pictures, recorded disks, and radio broadcast, essential for instilling a sense of national identity.³²

The Babi movement and its messianic message of protest echoed this very dramatized world of ritualistic Shi'ism at the time of unsettling losses and defeats. A crisis of confidence arising from the conduct of the religious and the political establishments no doubt was crucial in the shaping of the Babi message of renewal. It was aggravated by greater frequency of pandemics, especially cholera, and increasing recurrence of famines in the middle decades of the century. These had deeper implications for the society's sense of community and its place in the world around it. As Iran became more incorporated into the world economy and diplomacy the contrasts in wealth and power became more pronounced. Subscribing to the Babi message of cyclical renewal promised a moral awakening away from the stagnant worldview of the Shi'i jurists and ineffectual Qajar rule. The endurance of the Babi, and later the Baha'i idea of moral renewal may be attributed to an ability to offer to some Iranians, especially among the marginalized and underprivileged, an optimistic space albeit clandestinely.³³

For majority Iranians, however, the Babi-Baha'i community soon turned into an unwanted Other—one that dared to question the very basis of Iran's Shi'i solidarity. As an enemy within they became targets of deep suspicion, sustained hostility, and campaigns of persecution even in the hand of ordinary people. It was as if the majority Shi'i population, itself largely defined by its persecution narrative, was in need of an internal enemy so as to reassert its identity boundaries. This was the way the Shi'i sense of Self could be reaffirmed in the face of potent foreign territorial, material and economic challenges. Politicization of anti-Baha'i accusations—that Baha'is were first puppets of tsarist imperialism then agents of British colonialism and finally tools of American and Zionist imperial ambitions—stemmed from the same sense of insecurity. It was especially fueled in the early twentieth century by

the clergy's loss of power and prestige. Yet when empowered under the Islamic Republic, the clergy's anti-Baha'i campaign, and its politicized fabrications, did not cease to exist. It is as if the regime and its many constituencies were eager to invent a nemesis to reassure their own troubled solidarity. Despite widespread hate campaigns, however, the popular appeal of anti-Baha'ism seems to be in decline, for it no longer serves as a marker of religious cohesion within a large sector of Iranian society.³⁴

Perceptions of material decline and moral inertia continued to haunt Qajar society and become the chief preoccupation of its intelligentsia. From the middle of the nineteenth century, Persian literature of reform increasingly referred to "ruined Iran" (*Iran-e viran*) and sought a remedy for its ills in Western material culture and its military, administrative, technological, and political advances. Adopting modernity, the more appealing side of European enterprise, engaged Iranians (like Ottoman, Egyptian, and most reformists of the non-West) as key to national awakening (*bidari*). Mostly coming from the Qajar elite, dissident intellectuals, and later from the merchant class, they sought remedy not only in construction of railroad and new industries but in the rule of law (*qanun*), reorganization of the state, and especially modern education.

Similar to Young Ottomans and Central Asian and Tartary counterparts, Iranian freethinkers like Mirza Fath 'Ali Akhundzadeh in the Caucasus and Mirza Malkam Khan in Iran viewed language as key to this reawakening. They called for reform of the Arabic-Persian script, which they viewed with some degree of naivety as key to greater literacy and deliverance from the yoke of superstitions. Along the same lines, even prior to debates over script reform, they experimented with writing of "pure" (*sareh*) Persian free from excessive foreign words. Reaction to the excesses of the Arabized style of the Timurid and Safavid periods anticipated the rise of simplified Persian in the age of press and mass education. It also denoted prominence of language as the cornerstone of cultural differentiation. Yet simple style, with many terms borrowed from European languages, was still seen as regaining of a linguistic sovereignty free from Arabic and unbound by the conventional strictures of the court and madrasa cultures.³⁵

Material disadvantages aside, the Qajar society remained relatively confident in the realm of culture. Reawakening may have appeared necessary and unavoidable to a few, but for multitudes the traditional mores and practices were sanctified and unalterable. The patriarchal order engrained in the state and religious structures remained intact and with it all the male-dominated sociocultural values at the core of familial and personal Self. Yet despite appearances of a strict enforcement of patriarchy and policing of gender boundaries, empowered women were not entirely absent. Nor should their presence be overlooked in the identity discourse of the period. It may be argued that below the surface, a layer of female assertion was palpable often in the form of a matriarchal substructure. Within the Qajar households or among women of the clerical families, for instance, powerful women asserted their influence not only in family affairs but also in public life, the economy, and even politics.³⁶

The complexity of power relations in the Qajar households speaks plainly of the gender roles as signifiers of identity. Men were expected to exhibit manly behavior with superior authority toward female subordinates. Safeguard of their kernel of honor (*namus*) by means of careful segregation, covering and controlling, was

meant to check the subversive potentials that womenfolk were perceived to have possessed. Volumes of folk tales common in Indian, Persian, Arabic, and Turkish literature about women's power of deception and sexual infidelity—often exposed by speaking animals—reflect such male anxieties. Though the Iranian modernists were exposed through education, diplomacy, and travel to tangible aspects of Western culture, reflections on gender roles remained largely intact. Excessive praises of the beauty of the *Farangi* women nevertheless were common. Even among the few who were familiar with European freethinking, ideas of progress, positivism, and scientific method, gender roles did not significantly change.³⁷

Gender issue aside, through Naser al-Din Shah's royal tours and other diplomatic representations abroad, new state and national symbols were introduced while older symbols of the state were redefined or standardized. Iranian flags and insignias, for example, with a long history going back to Sasanian Iran, came closer to a standard design. The Lion and Sun (*shir o khorshid*) insignia as the Iranian royal emblem had long appeared in diverse permutations. By the early Qajar era it received a new lease of life first as a royal decoration bestowed on foreign dignitaries and gradually as a standard symbol of the state on coins and military uniforms. Its appearance on the Iranian national flag—itself not standardized even by the end of the nineteenth century—displayed the redefining of old symbols for new functions. In the process, it gradually lost the allegory of a female sun rising behind a male lion, a symbolism that visualized a subtle gender inference. The female sun serving as a source of moral nourishment in the background seems to be supporting the male lion, often shown as seated in the Qajar portrayal.

The national anthem, alien to the Iranian royal culture, had to be imported, however, via Dar al-Fonun French military music instructors and later in the course of Naser al-Din Shah's visit to Vienna. There the baffled Austrian host, who could not imagine a military parade in honor of the shah without an anthem, commissioned one for Persia by the famous composer Johann Strauss Jr., the "King of Waltz." Yet it was no earlier than the Constitutional Revolution that the first Persian anthem was composed with patriotic lyrics and popular appeal.

On the evolving Qajar landscape the Dar al-Fonun, Iran's only modern institution of higher education before the end of the century, also contributed to the discourse of identity by instilling a new element of national pride in the minds of its students. Many of them later to become influential in shaping the Constitutional and early Pahlavi Iran, these children of the privileged classes were educated with modern school textbooks, mostly translations from French and Austrian sources. They received instructions not only in exact sciences and military skills but in world geography and history. Beside European instructors, a small group of European-educated Iranians, among them the renowned Mirza Malkom Khan, also was instrumental in disseminating a protonationalist culture.

Jalal al-Din Mirza's *Nameh-ye Khosravan*, the first truly nationalist history textbook in Persian written in a "pure" style free from Arabic, was intended for the Dar al-Fonun curriculum. It displayed clear tropes of nationalist mentality. He adopted a linear course for his coverage of Iranian history from the mythological past to early modern times. Aside from the imaginary prehistoric dynasties, which he borrowed from neo-Zoroastrian texts, the rest of his account from legendary Kayanids to the historic Sasanian kings closely followed the *Shahnameh* narrative, with a degree of glorification. In contrast, he treated Islam as an invasive aberration in the

Iranian grand narrative. His portrayal of Islamic Iran as a progressively decaying era compared to the distant past moreover anticipated the Iranian nationalist narrative of the Constitutional period and after.³⁸

The Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911) tied together these disparate traits of identity into an integrated ideology of nationalism: a rarified notion of territorial Iran vis-à-vis its neighbors and the world at large. It made a greater differentiation between the Iranian nation and the Iranian state, and it fused the indigenous notions of dissent with Western-inspired notions of democracy and revolutionary nationalism. A call for patriotism and “love of the motherland” (*hobb-e vatan*) was emblematic of this collective sense of Iranian “nation” (*mellat*). This was a nation “awakened” from the slumber of “tyranny” (*estebdad*) and “ignorance” (*jahl*) in order to acquire a constitutional order (*masbruteh*) and benefit from the rule of law and popular representation. In its secularized messianic vision of nationalism, the sacred (*moqaddas*) locus of the nation, the National Consultative Assembly, established through blood and sacrifice was to defend the nation against its despotic detractors. In the civil war that broke out in the aftermath of the bombardment of the Majles and during the “minor tyranny” (1908–1909), the nationalists (*melli-yun*) and their *mojahedin* forces engaged in a nationwide “revolution” (*enghelab*) that eventually routed the reactionaries and restored the Constitution. A blend of native dissent; socialist trends from the Caucasus; and European, mostly French, romantic nationalism fueled the vision of Constitutional Iran.³⁹

NATIONALIST IDENTITY IN THE PAHLAVI ERA

Long before ideological nationalism took root through encounters with the world at large or with modern print culture and state symbols, it may be argued, Iran had developed a coherent notion of itself. This was an experience somewhat distinct from constructed nationalisms of the new nation-states. The latter often emerged during and after a colonial experience of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries almost by default or by force of circumstances. The majority of the nation-states in the postwar Middle East fit the definition of “imagined communities” as advanced by Benedict Anderson. The Middle East itself being a geopolitical construct may also fit into the same category. Yet such an interpretation deserves serious revision once applied to societies in the non-West with long mytho-historical memories and linguistic and literary continuity. Countries like Egypt, Iran, China, India, and Japan—despite political discontinuity, fragmentation, and ethnolinguistic divides—fell into a different category. They no doubt adopted integrated nationalism of Europe, be it romantic or authoritarian, yet they had a deeper sense of themselves prior to modern communication and technologies.⁴⁰

Anderson and other critics of wholesale nationalism of course deservedly problematized the conventional narrative of an everlasting national identity. They questioned fixed notions grounded in an undisturbed historical process and raised doubts about the nineteenth century idea of unfolding national destinies. Often complemented by stereotypes of “national character,” a legacy of Western travel literature and Orientalist fixations, these essentialist constructs are no longer historically plausible. Questioning them no doubt helps us rethink such time-honored *a priories* as a homogenous nation, uninterrupted past, undivided loyalty to the state or an established religion, and all-embracing cultural stereotypes.

A critical view of Iranian nationalism thus helps unfold the myth of historical continuity from Cyrus to Pahlavi as forged in the twentieth century. The motto of the Pahlavi propaganda machine, “God, the Shah, the Motherland,” also does not stand the test of time. Equally debatable is the idea of “Greater Iran” stretching from Transoxania to the Caucasus and from Mesopotamia to the Indian Ocean. Even the everlasting boundaries of a fixed Iran from the Caspian to the Persian Gulf may be safely deconstructed. Extolment of the pre-Islamic past in particular meant overcoming the narrative of decline associated with the Islamic era, and especially the Qajar period. Archeological excavations and translation into Persian of European histories threw new light on ancient Iran and brought greater accuracy disengaged from myths and legends. Yet it also allowed the Pahlavi state to employ an oversimplified version to buttress its own glory.

Along the same lines, a blind pride in Iranian exceptionalism and ethnic superiority in the interwar period and even in the post-Second World War period prevailed, no doubt, under the influence of European totalitarian ideologies and Fascist advocacy of Aryan superiority. Embraced by the Iranian state first under Reza Shah and later by the ultraright parties of the postwar era, these trends acquired enduring popularity in Iran. Sometimes even divorced from their ideological origins, they came to capture popular imagination for decades to come—and arguably even up to the present. Even in premodern times such notions were not entirely missing as spelled out somewhat half-seriously in the proverb: “all talents are only with the Iranians” (*honar nazd-e Iranian ast o bas*). The patriotic motto “Without Iran may my body no longer be” (*cho Iran nabashad tan-e man mabad*) is an exaggerated variant on an original *Shahnameh* verse. To the same category belong such clichés as Persian hospitality and Iranian ingenuity.

Yet the Pahlavi sense of Iranian superiority was essentially a construct forged against an Arab nemesis. It implied a sense of resentment not only toward the seventh century Arab conquest and imposition of Islam as an alien religion but toward the neighboring Arab countries of the region. No doubt it was fueled by boundary disputes with Iraq and suspicion toward the Wahhabis and their rabid anti-Shi'i tendencies. It was albeit oblivious of cultural, familial, and religious ties that for long tied Iran to its Arab neighbors in the Shi'i Iraq and the Persian Gulf, not to mention Arabian Peninsula and Lebanon. Even by the late 1930s the Shi'i shrine cities of Iraq held a large Persian “resident” (*mojaver*) population with distinct Persian characteristics.

Modern Iranian national identity (*hoviyyat-e milli*), as evolved through the Pahlavi era, streamlined Iranian memories and experiences into a homogenized nationalist narrative. As has often been noted, this was above all to bolster the Pahlavi legitimacy. It was at the expense of ignoring, at times deliberately suppressing, an enormous range of ethnic diversities, historical discontinuities, competing views of identity, and geographical disconnects. Predictably, the Pahlavi cultural elite—a blend of landed nobility and the educated urban middle classes—glorified Iran's ancient past and its imperial supremacy to compensate for feelings of political and economic decline in recent times under the Qajar rule. Early Pahlavi nationalism moreover was a mirror image of the then-populist European ideologies. Glorification of the ancient past was the order of the day in Mussolini's Italy, Franco's Spain, and Atatürk's Turkey.⁴¹

Early Pahlavi nationalism, moreover, stressed prolonged sufferings in the hands of alien conquerors, often nomadic, as the root cause of material decline and moral decrepitude. It highlighted waves of Macedonian, Arab, Turk, Mongolian, and later Uzbek, Ottoman, and Afghan invasions. In what may be called a national narrative of victimization the “Iranian element” (*’onsor-e Irani*) was naturally highlighted. Yet subordinating these alien, often inferior, cultures to Iranian superior ways, it was argued, the Iranian element invariably prevailed. Members of the secretarial class, the *divanis*, who were mostly the landed nobility, thus often were viewed as rendering an invaluable civilizing mission toward the otherwise uncouth intruders who were to be soon infused into the urbane Iranian culture. A long line of great ministers and officials—such as the Barmakides, Nezam al-Molk, Nasir al-Din Tusi, and Rashid al-Din Fazlollah—were seen as the force behind the Persianization process.⁴²

Beyond forging a nationalist narrative, other measures were at work in shaping a conscious national ideology. Setting of boundaries stamped on the Iranians another marker of identity. Prolonged boundary disputes in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and British India, and later with new neighboring nation-states, came to an end in the early Pahlavi period. Yet delimitation of borders in due course divided up communities with distinct tribal or linguistic identities. One example of nationalist projects nurtured or superimposed by neighboring states is greater Kurdistan. Another is Iranian Azerbaijan versus the Republic of Azerbaijan (the former Aran). The defeat of the secessionist pro-Soviet Democratic Parties of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan in 1946 and eventual reassertion of Iranian sovereignty nevertheless was not entirely because of geopolitical and ideological factors. Rather, the inability of these provincial nationalisms to sustain viable support among the populace demonstrated the overall appeal of historical Iran and Iranian national citizenship.

Registering and documenting personal identities and issuing passports further reinforced Iranian citizenship. These measures gave individuals a sense of belonging to a defined national space and a common destiny. Deliberate and at times ruthless, the policies of dismantling regional, tribal, and linguistic entities helped homogenize Iranian identity. Forced settlement of the migrating nomads, punitive action against marauding bandits, disciplining the peasants and local notables, subduing the clerical class and restricting its symbols of influence, and enforcing of a Westernized dress code, all had profound impact on mass national awareness. Likewise, the unification of the armed forces, conscription and mandatory military service, employment in an ever-expanding state bureaucracy, and above all standard school curricula at all levels enhanced sense of national belonging.⁴³

The founding of a national bank, issuance of national currency, and expansion of a network of telegraphic and telephone services, roads and railroad, even standardization of weights and measures helped overcome local resistances. In a surprisingly short span of time the centralizing Pahlavi state managed to remove major ethnic constraints and regional barriers. It also projected its might through songs, marches, school uniforms, sports activities, and Boy Scouts organizations. State propaganda further praised military service, promoted its cultural achievements, and elevated a set of positivistic values as key to moral and scientific advancements.

Confronting international realities of the post-Second World War, Iranian identity evolved beyond the state cultural policies and propaganda. The polarizing impact of the Cold War and Iran’s bitter standoff with Britain and the United States

over oil nationalization and economic sovereignty in the 1940s and the early 1950s allowed ordinary Iranians to sense in a tangible way a shared national destiny. It was as if the “West,” a construct of enormous potency and allure, came to represent the ultimate Other, supplanting all earlier ghosts of the Iranian past. In the mind of many intellectuals of the 1950s and 1960s the setbacks in the nationalization campaign, the collapse of Mohammad Mosaddeq’s government, and eradication of the Tudeh Party left an indelible aftertaste. They began to subscribe to the Western Other lasting attributes of conspiracy and exploitation, features that in the coming decades came to haunt Iranian imagination and culminate in the Great Satan of the Islamic Revolution.⁴⁴

The hostile image of the West was in sharp contrast to earlier adoration of Western civilization at least since the time of the Constitutional Revolution and advocacy of adopting its values. Generations of Iranians from all walks of life admired Western material culture and were fascinated by its achievements. In 1920 Hasan Taqizadeh, a major figure of the Constitutional and Pahlavi eras, boldly prescribed for his country’s ills a simple remedy: “Iran must absolutely become Westernized (*Farangi-ma’ab*) in exterior and interior and physically and spiritually.” This he argued must be done through “unconditional surrender and absolute submission to Europe and acquiring Western manners and customs, mores and upbringing, sciences, technologies, lifestyle, and everything else with no exemption (except for language).”⁴⁵ Though he later partially modified his views, he remained representative of a worldview that by and large endured at least up to the 1960s.

For a generation of intellectual dissidents of the 1960s and 1970s who were captivated with the discourse of Occidentosis (*gharbzadegi*, alternatively translated as “Westoxication” and “Plague of the West”), there was a different interpretation of the West. Most significantly, the cultural critic and author Jalal Al-e Ahmad saw in the West a mighty and cunning power, like the Turianids of the *Shahnameh*, that could lure and corrupt. Perhaps since the Safavid anti-Sunni discourse, Iranians had never forged such a potent and penetrating opponent as the “Western Plague.” Essentially an antidote to positivistic fascination of Europe in likes of Taqizadeh, Occidentosis went a step further by questioning the wholesale validity of Western modernity. The idea, needless to say, was inspired in earnest by discourse of alienation and crisis of identity in postwar Europe and hence in essence a modern preoccupation.

First introduced by the cultural nationalist and rationalist prophet Ahmad Kasravi in the early Pahlavi era, Occidentosis was later developed more soberly by Fakhr al-Din Shademan as a critique of the excesses of the state’s hurried Westernizing policies under Reza Shah and its adverse effects on the rhythm of the Iranian society. Later the countermodernist thinker Ahmad Fardid, an eccentric philosophy professor in Tehran University, appropriated the Occidentosis discourse. He coined the term *gharbzadegi* (Occidentosis) to define a deeply entrenched philhellenic trait in Islamic philosophy. Influenced by German idealism, and particularly by an intentional reading of Heidegger, Fardid held the view that the persistent philosophical current was complicated by the uncritical reading of the Enlightenment and later the positivistic philosophy of the nineteenth century. This affliction, in effect, alienated non-Western societies and poisoned their cultures up to our time. The intellectuals’ blind veneration for the West, he argued, came at the cost of losing touch with the moral sources of their own past and their own cultural identity.

Popularized by Al-e Ahmad, Occidentosis found resonance with generations of younger Iranians lost in the barren cultural landscape of the late Pahlavi era. Westernized identity, it was stressed, was an ailment contracted by, or more accurately superimposed on, non-Western peoples and cultures without their agency. The West, luring through means of technology and material glitter, enslaved the East to serve its economic and consumer interests. Occidentosis thus promoted a nativist vision of history that nostalgically located authenticity in an imagined Islamic “tradition” while attributing material and moral dislocation to Iran’s postconstitutional modernizing project. As a polemical essay, it was highly influential despite its numerous errors and misrepresentations and with an essentialist worldview that proved to be highly misleading. Nearly four decades later, it continues to nourish the current Islamic regime’s insatiable thirst for conspiracy.⁴⁶

SELF AND OTHER IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

With the coming of the Islamic Revolution, the readymade dichotomy of West versus the rest gained a new lease of life serving as a crucial component of the revolutionary ideology. In the rhetoric of the new regime, the authentic Iranian identity was only valid, and the Western plague only cured, when Iranians returned to the caring bosom of the “true Islam” (*Islam-e راستin*). Defying the “corrupting” influences of the West, the United States in particular was seen as a hegemon with demonic powers to deceive and detract. The “world-devouring” Great Satan nevertheless was seen as powerless and ineffective, even desperate, in the face of “true” and “committed” Muslims. It was this seemingly uncompromising ideal that was to be installed in the hearts and minds of a new generation of Iranians. It was to cleanse the vices and impurities of secularism and alter the ways of the “idol-worshipping” (*taghuti*) elite of the Pahlavi era.⁴⁷

The righteous Self versus the wicked Other in the Islamic Revolution further relied on a martyrdom paradigm, especially invoked during a long and atrocious war with Iraq. Here waging “war in the fronts of truth against falsehood” sharpened the line between the “Islamic nation” (*ommat-e eslami*) and the global forces of arrogance (*estekbar*). In this encounter—in reality the first large-scale invasion that Iran had experienced since the occupation of Azerbaijan in 1827—the Ba’athist regime in Iraq was only the “lesser demon,” a puppet in the hand of the Great Satan and its allies. Sacrifice and martyrdom were not merely to defend the “Islamic motherland” (*mihan-e Islami*), as Iran was referred to in the war propaganda. Nor was it only to preserve the nascent Islamic Revolution but to deliver the liberating message of the revolution beyond Iran’s to all the “disinherited” peoples of the world.

For thousands of volunteers, mostly the youth of high school and university age, and for many in the regular army and in the Revolutionary Guards corps, the war ingrained a new identity: one that portrayed them as liberators on a sacred mission. A protracted stalemate in the war, massive casualties and loss of life in the trenches, propaganda fatigue, and the ever-expanding war cemeteries took their toll. Despite Iran’s humiliating compliance with the ceasefire that put a bitter end to Khomeini’s messianic dream, the war had a transformative effect on its veterans and arguably on the Iranian society at large. The experience of political isolation and the singlehanded resistance against the enemy rekindled a sense of self-reliance that endured even the callous stubbornness of the leader of the Islamic Republic. It

is as if the majority of the Iranians chose to memorialize the trauma and tribulation of a ghastly war as reaffirmation of their national resolve.⁴⁸

In the postrevolutionary years and more so since 1989, the Iranian regime moved away from the rhetoric of blood and sacrifice. A populist brand of folk religiosity, a culture of ritualistic cleansing against a host of outside pollutants, instead found a new resonance. Cleansing was reinterpreted, albeit discretely, not merely a pious act of cleansing or segregation between “pure” believer and “polluted” non-believer. Rather, it became an element of ideological differentiation between “one of us” (*khodî*) and the rest of the society. In this worldview the Islamic nation could only be immune of “cultural invasion” (*tabajom-e farhangî*) if the committed ones (*motaa'hed*) of Iran could resist infiltration of the “enemy.” To this end, the plurality of Iranian society and culture was also seen to be inherently at odds with Islamic unanimity.⁴⁹

Ironically the Islamic Republic, as it evolved and consolidated its institutional base, remained largely loyal to the state-enforced, all-embracing project of national homogenization, at times with even greater vehemence than Pahlavi times. Even though the narrative of ancient glories was denied and the obsession with Achaemenid imperial power derided, the memory of that past barely faded. Likewise, all the rhetoric about cultural intrusion took shape, and still does, against a backdrop of increasing desire for borrowing and incorporating virtually all aspects of Western material culture from cyberspace and nuclear technology to fast food and consumerism.⁵⁰

The boundaries of a reconstructed Islamic identity thus were set on fragile ground whereby even the “committed” had to negotiate between ideological loyalties on the one hand and the luring realities of a rapidly globalizing world on the other. Despite the Islamic Republic’s systematic and prolonged investment in re-Islamizing Iran through education and propaganda, it only partially, and with a diminishing rate, succeeded in transforming the Iranian perceptions of themselves. Even a cursory review of the contemporary popular culture demonstrates persistence of nationalist ideals and symbols. True, the postrevolutionary generations by and large are more attached than the Pahlavi era to such symbols and rituals as rites of pilgrimage to Mecca and Karbala, visitation of shrines, commemoration of Moharram, religious folk beliefs and practices, and an odious brand of folk religion promoted by the clergy or by professional “adulators” (*maddah*). Yet staunch supporters of the Islamic Republic aside (and those sectors who financially and otherwise benefit from the regime), there exists below the surface a defused but deep level of skepticism. Among a large sector of the urban middle classes—now more than 75 percent of population—exists an almost endemic defiance of ideological Islam. Among the intellectuals and educated public a vast majority seem to be questioning the very idea of Islam as prime building block of Iranian society.

According to the polls conducted by the Islamic Republic’s Ministry of Islamic Guidance published in 2001—more than two decades after the Islamic Revolution—a vast majority of the Iranians, as many as 86 percent, were highly proud or very proud of their national identity. This is among the highest in the Muslim world. And a large percentage, as many perhaps as a 25 percent, seem to confess to no particular religious denomination—a remarkable commentary on the reverse effects of Islamification in schools, in the media, and over the pulpit of the mosques.⁵¹

Yet domestically, state policies through media and government institutions helped undermine Iran's patchwork of ethnic and regional diversity in a perennial fear of secessionist ambitions. Alternative religious communities and alternative ethnicities were often glossed over, diluted, or suppressed by the center in favor of what may be called a generic Persian-based Islamo-Iranian identity.⁵² In a country with nearly 40 percent of the population speaking languages and local dialects other than Persian as their vernacular (with 24 percent speaking Azarbaijani Turkish and 9 percent Kurdish), expressions of local cultures and languages are badly underrepresented. Even a greater fear of diversity in Iran is visible when it comes to religious minorities or religious tendencies other than the brand promoted by the Islamic Republic. Chronic persecution of the Sufis and Sunnis, the latter about 10 percent of the total population, on grounds of their religious beliefs, has accelerated in recent years. In recent years the Baha'is became target of venomous attacks in the media and press and their leadership and community organizers were harassed and jailed. The political charges that were brought against them, devoid of a shred of truth, speak of deep-seated grudges and enmities.

Accusing Baha'is as agents of Zionism and enemies of Islam is doubtlessly driven by darker motives. Sheer grudge aside, the current regime needed an "enemy within" to define its Self and solidify its grassroots. The imagined Baha'i threat seemingly is not sufficient. To refine its identity the regime invented other foes: the Freemasons, the Wahhabis (by which it demonizes the Sunnis), the Devil-Worshippers, the Sufis, and the "pseudo-mystics." Political villains, too, were included: the Pahlavi royalists, the "Deviators" (*Monafeqin*)—a disparaging label for the Mojahedin Khalq, the "religious reformists," and supporters of the "Sedition" (*fitneh*)—by which the 2009 Green protesters are branded. If the Great Satan is the prime mover of a grand conspiracy against the Islamic Republic, in this paranoid scheme, the Baha'is and the host of other enemies are to be labeled, paraded, and punished as domestic puppets and agents of named or unnamed foreign powers. Generated by the fertile imagination of the propaganda commissars of the regime, over the past decade conspiracy theories have reached a new level of delusion.

Yet the process of greater Islamic integration initiated by the state is not always followed the intended consequences. The extensive internal migration (mostly from villages to cities but also across provincial lines), new electronic media, and communication from multichannel television and regional radios to Internet rapidly changed the face of the Iranian society. Further growth of higher education, including a vast number of private universities in remoter parts of the country, helped facilitate access to the outside world. With these changes came an unprecedented rekindling of the identity debate. The changing demographics, rising social mobility, women's not yet fully voiced but nevertheless potent demands for greater social presence and legal rights are serious challenges to the vision of a homogenized Islamic Iran (*Iran-e eslami*). At the outset of the revolution a set of ideals and slogans sufficed to attract the masses and secure their loyalty. For the maturing generations of Iranians that message now has turned into a fusion of patriarchy, misogyny, and tired slogans. They seem to be quickly losing their luster.

If we can speak of national character (in a cautious context of the post-Orientalist age), surely elements of skepticism are manifest in contemporary Iranian culture. Popularity of such revered icons as Hafez, Khayyam, and Ferdowsi is but one example. As much as the cultural institutions of the Islamic republic would like to present

them in an Islamic light, the national poets of Iran are revered not because of their adherence to conventions of organized religion but because they are building blocks of an independent cultural identity. Oddly enough, the experience of modernity not only confirmed such indigenous skepticism but added to its complexity.

Religious sympathies widespread among all sectors of the Iranian public are reconciled, not so happily perhaps, with a “Dionysian” aspect in their poetry, music, and revelry. This is best evident in popularity of Hafez’s lyrical poetry. His self-characterization as a *rend*—an antinomian and a skeptic who is coming from below and is prone to subversion, love and leisure, music, drinking, narcotics, and even crossing sexual boundaries—reserved its appeal. This is a far cry from the “hypocritical piety” of the judge-jurists, the morality police, the pious *zاهد*, and the trickster in Sufi garb, figures that are frequently mocked in Hafez’s odes.

The question of identity in today’s climate begs attention because Iranian society has articulated a Self essentially distinct from the state and often in conflict with what is prescribed by the state. The widening gap—even an identity war—is out in the open. Since summer of 2009 it is visible in the slogans and symbols of the Green Movement (*jonbesh-e sabz*) and its social composition. The evolving undercurrents of a new Iranian individuality, largely generational and urban, now demands political openness, greater gender and political freedoms, an end to the country’s isolation and a desire for global inclusion. The younger Iranians seem less motivated by dated conspiratorial rhetoric and more by a sincere search for their roots. The budding quest, at least among a sector of the Iranian youth, may not tragically end, as it did in the legend of Sohrab. Perhaps a new quest is in progress, as in Sohrab Sepehri’s poem:

Tonight I must leave.
And go somewhere,
That has room only for the shirt of my loneliness.
Where trees of epics are in sight,
Toward that vast plane of wordlessness that forever calls on me.
Where are my shoes?
Tonight I must pick up that suitcase
Who called “Sohrab”?

The poet’s existential journey, like Sohrab of the legend, is one of self-discovery even though more individualistic in nature. And it is not bound by words, perhaps a reference to the cultural burden of sacred texts. He walks toward the trees of epics—a reference to the *Shahnameh*, perhaps—which are lying beyond the vast planes of his loneliness. Is this a journey of deliverance through the “Green Space” (*Hajm-e Sabz*) as the title of his poetry volume invites us to think—a quest perhaps for a utopian paradise (*pardis*) beyond the ancient divides of Iran and *aniran*?⁵³

NOTES

1. Abu al-Qasem Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, ed. J. Khalighi-Motlaq (Costa Mesa, CA, and New York: Mazda Publishers, 1990), 2:118–99. For English translation see *The Tragedy of Sohrab and Rostam*, trans. J. W. Clinton, rev. ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996), and D. Davis’s excellent prose and verse translation, *The Lion and the Throne* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 1998), 209–36. In reading of Sohrab’s

- story as an identity quest, I was inspired by A. D. Smith's interpretation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannos* in his *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991; and Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1993), 1–4.
2. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, 125 (all translations are mine).
 3. Ibid., 127. For Faridun's division of the world in the *Shahnameh* and origins of enmity between Iran and Turan, see A. Amanat, "Divided Patrimony, Tree of Royal Power, and Fruit of Vengeance: Political Paradigms and Iranian Self-Image in the Story of Faridun in the *Shahnameh*," in *Shahnameh Studies I*, ed. C. Melville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Center for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, 2006), 49–70. See also *Encyclopedia Iranica*, ed. E. Yarshater (New York, Columbia University, 1981–) henceforth *Elr*: "Aneran" (Ph. Gignoux).
 4. Ferdowsi, *The Shahnameh*, 171.
 5. Few general surveys are done on the evolution of Iranian identity. For an excellent overview see A. Ashraf's entry in *Elr*: "Iranian Identity," parts 1, 3, and 4 and cited sources. See also *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (*EI2*): "Kawmiyya, iii. In Persia" (A. K. S. Lambton).
 6. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 10.
 7. For Iran's historical nomenclature, see G. Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on Its Origin* (Rome: ISMO, 1989), and his entry in *Elr*: "Iranian Identity: pre-Islamic period." A. S. Shahbazi, "The History of Idea of Iran," in *Birth of the Persian Empire*, ed. V. Sarkhosh-Curtis and S. Stewart (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 100–111, and Z. Sajjadi, "Nam-e Iran dar Nakhostin Asar-e Farsi," in *Namvareh-ye Doktor Mahmud Afshar*, ed. I. Afshar (Tehran: Bonyad Mawqafat-e Doctor Mahmud Afshar, 1986), 2:248–59.
 8. See *Elr*: Eranshahr (D. N. MacKenzie) for historical occurrence. For the etymology of *shahr*, see M. H. ibn Khalaf Tabrizi, *Borhan-e Qate'*, ed. M. Mo'in (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1361/1982), 3:1314n9.
 9. M. Qazvini, ed., "Moqaddameh-ye Shahnameh-ye Abu Mansuri," *Bist Maqaleh*, vol. 2 (Tehran: 1313/1934). Also cited in M. A. Riyahi, *Sarcheshmeha-ye Ferdowsi-shenasi* (Tehran: 1372/1993), 175.
 10. For the continuity of Persian kingship model, see, for example, an excellent article by C. E. Bosworth, "The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran and the Search for Dynastic Connections with the Past," *Iran* 11 (1973): 51–62, and R. Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1975), esp. chaps. 6, 8, and 10. See also R. Levy, "Persia and the Arabs," in *The Legacy of Persia*, ed. A. J. Arberry (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 60–88.
 11. Katib Chelebi's universal history (*Fadhlakat Aqwal al-Akhyar fi 'ilm al-Tarikh wa'l-Akhhbar* [*Fadhlakat al-Tawarikh*], Ms. Bayazit Library, dated 1052/1642,) stretches from ancient Persian kingship to the Ottoman Empire of his own time.
 12. For the persistence of Persian memory among the Shu'ubiyya, see, for example, H. Momtahan, *Nahzat-e Shu'ubiyyah dar Barabar-e Khelafat-e Omavi va 'Abbasi* (Tehran: 1354/1965), esp. chaps. 13–21, and Roy P. Mottahedeh, "The Shu'ubiyyah Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran," *IJMES* 7 (1976): 161–82. See also H. A. R. Gibbs, "The Social Significance of the Shu'ubiya," in idem, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 62–73, and J. Homa'i, *Shu'ubiyyah*, ed. M. Qosdi (Isfahan: 1363/1984).
 13. On *Zandaqa* heresies among the Shu'ubiyya see Momtahan, *Nahzat*, 225–64. For early nationalist views of early Iranian heresies, see G. H. Sadighi, *Les mouvements religieux iraniens au IIe et au IIIe siècle de l'hégire* (Paris, 1938); Persian translation by the author as *Jonbeshha-ye Dini-e Irani dar Qarnha-ye Dovvom wa Sevvom-e Hejri* (Tehran: 1993); and Frye, *Golden Age*, 126–49. For similar manifestation of Iranian identity of humble origin, see S. M. Stern, "Ya'qub the Coppersmith and Persian National Sentiments," in *Iran*

- and *Islam: A Volume in Memory of Vladimir Minorsky*, ed. C. E. Bosworth (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1971) 535–56.
14. On the emergence of modern Persian, see G. Lazard, “The Rise of the New Persian Language,” *Cambridge History of Iran*, R. Frye ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 4:595–632; and G. M. Wickens, “Persian Literature and Affirmation of Identity,” in *Introduction to Islamic Civilization*, ed. R. M. Savory (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 71–78. For Shu’ubiyya literary awareness, see L. Richter-Bernburg, “Linguistic Shu’ubiya and Early Neo-Persian Prose,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 94, no. 1 (1974): 55–64.
 15. For Judeo-Persian and other early Persian documents in non-Arabic scripts, see P. Khanlari, *Tarikh-e Zaban-e Farsi*, 3 vols., 6th ed. (Tehran: 1377/1998), 1:307–35 and cited sources.
 16. For treating Persian by the twentieth-century Iranian scholars as a vehicle for Iran’s high culture and its endurance in a literary tradition see for instance M. T. Bahar, *Sabk-shenasi ya Tarikh-e Tatavvor-e Nasr-e Farsi*, 6th ed. (Tehran: 1370/1991), vol. 1, esp. chaps. 4, 6, 8, and Z. Safa, *Tarikh-e Adabiyat dar Iran*, 12th ed. (Tehran: 1371/1992), 1:140–82.
 17. See for instance R. Hovannesian and G. Sabagh, eds. *The Persian Presence in Islamic World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), esp. E. Yarshater, “The Persian Presence in Islamic World,” 4–125, and cited sources.
 18. Little has been done on what may be defined as “poetic space” as the abode of antinomian thought in Persian literature. Surveys of Persian poetry of the post-Mongol era in particular, when antinomian trends abound, focus largely on literary form and technical details rather than the sociocultural context. My forthcoming study of heresy in the Iranian world intends to highlight poetry’s role in shaping an alternative culture beyond the accepted socioreligious norms.
 19. Hafez, *Divan*, ed. P. Khanlari, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Sokhan, 1362/1983), no. 164, 344.
 20. For Persophonía see B. Fagner, *Die “Persophonie”: Regionalität, Identität, und Sprachkontakt in der Geschichte Asiens* (Halle an der Saale: n.p., 1999).
 21. See for instance *EIr*: “‘Ajam” (C. E. Bosworth). It is noteworthy that *Iraq* itself is a term of Sasanian origin presumably meaning “palm groves” or, alternatively, “lowlands.”
 22. On evolution of *Tazhik* and *Tajik* since Ghaznavid era see Ashraf, *EIr*: “Iranian Identity, III” and M. Dabirsiyaqi, “Tat va Tajik” in *Namvareh-ye Doktor Mahmud Afshar*, ed. I. Afshar (Tehran, Bonyad-e Mawqafat-e Doktor Mahmud Afshar, 1370/1991), 6:3374–421.
 23. On the evolving notion of the Guarded Domain of Iran since Ilkhanid era, see D. Krawulsky, *Iran, Das Reich der Ilhane: Eine Topographisch-Historische Studie* (Weisbaden: Eisenbrauns Publishers, 1978); idem, *The Mongols Ilkhans and their Vizier Rashid al-Din* (Frankfurt and New York: Peter Lang Publisher, 2011), esp. chap. 3; and *EIr*, Ashraf “Iranian Identity,” vol. 3 (Safavid period).
 24. For the Shi’i Arab *ulama* of Jabal ‘Amil and their interaction with the state and the Iranian population, see R. Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004), esp. chaps. 1–3. See also S. A. Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Changes in Shi’ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984), chaps. 4–8.
 25. See, for example, R. Matthee, “Between Aloofness and Fascination: Safavid views of the West,” *Iranian Studies* 31 (1998), 219–46, and idem. “Suspicion, Fear, and Admiration: Pre-Nineteenth-Century Iranian Views of the English and the Russians,” in *Iran and the Surrounding World: Interactions in Culture and Cultural Politics*, ed. R. Keddie and R. Matthee (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 121–45.
 26. Mirza Mohammad Kalantar, *Ruznameh*, ed. ‘A. Eqlal (Tehran: 1325/1946), and *Memoirs of Mirza Mohammad Kalantar* (Mayor of Fars). For Nader Shah’s notion of authority

- and legitimacy, see E. S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy of Post-Safavid Iran* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2006), esp. chaps. 2, 6–7, and cited sources.
27. For Aqa Mohammad Khan/Shah's perception of his rule and restoration of kingship, see A. Amanat, "The Kayanid Crown and the Qajar Reclaiming of the Royal Authority," *Iranian Studies*, no. 34, guest ed. L. Diba (2004): 17–30 and cited sources. See also G. Hambly, in *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 7:139–43. For his interest in the *Shahnameh*, see for instance "Azud al-Dawleh Sultan Ahmad Mirza Qajar," in *Tarikh-e 'Azodi*, ed. 'A. Nava'i (Tehran: n.p., 1355/1976). For Karim Khan Zand's perception of his rule see J. R. Perry, *Karim Khan Zand: A History of Iran, 1747–1779* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979) 214–22.
 28. For Fath-'Ali Shah's and revival of Persian kingship, see *ELr*: "Fath-'ali Sah Qajar" (Fath-'Ali Shah) by A. Amanat and idem, "The Kayanid Crown."
 29. For Qajar historiography see *ELr*: "Historiography, Qajar Period" (A. Amanat) and idem, "Legend. Legitimacy and Making of a National Narrative in the Historiography of the Qajar Iran (1785–1925)," in *History of Persian Literature*, vol. 10, gen. ed. E. Yarshater, as *Persian Historiography*, ed. C. Melville, chap. 7, 292–366 (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011).
 30. For the impact of the Russo-Persian wars see P. W. Avery, "An Enquiry into the Outbreak of the Second Russo-Persian War, 1826–28," in Bosworth, *Iran and Islam*, 17–45; A. Amanat, "Russian Intrusion into the Guarded Domain: Reflections of a Qajar Statesman on European Expansion," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113 (1993): 35–56; and R. Gleave, "Jihad and the Religious Legitimacy of the Early Qajar State," in *Religion and Society in Qajar Iran*, ed. R. Gleave (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), 41–70. On the impact of the Herat Crisis and wars with Britain, see A. Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831–96* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997; paperback ed., London, I. B. Tauris, 2008), chaps. 6–7, and M. Volodorsky, "Persia's Foreign Policy between the Two Herat Crisis, 1831–56," *Middle East Studies* 21 (1985): 111–51.
 31. For Martyn's visit and his translation and polemical exchanges, see A. Amanat, "Mujtahids and Missionaries: Shi'i Responses to Christian Polemics in the Early Qajar Period," in Gleave, *Religion and Society*, 247–69, reprinted in A. Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 127–48. See also 'A. Ha'eri, *Nakhostin Royaruha-ye Andishegaran-e Iran ba Do-royeh-ye Tamaddon-e Gharb* (Tehran: 1380/1991), chaps. 11–12.
 32. For social significance of the rituals of Moharram in the Qajar era, see, for example, K. S. Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala: Shi'i Symbols and Rituals in Modern Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2004), chaps. 1–3, and W. Floor, *The History of Theater in Iran* (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers, 2005), chaps. 4–5. See also J. Calmard, "Moharram Ceremonies and Diplomacy," in *Qajar Iran: Political, Social, and Cultural Changes, 1800–1925*, ed. E. Bosworth and C. Hillenbrand (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983) 213–28. For a recent interpretive analysis see H. Dabashi, *Shi'ism: A Religion of Protest* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), chap. 7.
 33. On the social context of the Babi Movement, see N. Keddie, "Religion and Irreligion in Early Iranian Nationalism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4 (1962): 265–95; A. Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989; paperback ed. Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2005), esp. introduction and chaps. 2, 6–8, and D. M. MacEoin, *The Messiah of Shiraz: Studies in Early and Middle Babism* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2009), esp. 203–324. For a postmodernist treatment see N. Mottahedeh, *Representing the Unpresentable: Historical Images of National Reform from the Qajar to the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008), chaps. 3–4, and H. Dabashi, *Shi'ism*, 181–224. On the emergence of the Baha'i community, see, for example, J. R. Cole,

- "Religious Dissidence and Urban Leadership: Baha'is in Qajar Shiraz and Tehran," *Iran* 73 (1999): 123–42, and for shaping of the Baha'i doctrine, see J. R. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998). For later development of the Baha'i identity especially among religious minorities, see M. Amanat, *Jewish Identities in Iran: Resistance and Conversion to Islam and the Baha'i Faith* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011).
34. On the roots and manifestation of anti-Baha'i attitudes in Iran, see A. Amanat, "The Historical Roots of the Persecution of Babis and Baha'is in Iran"; H. E. Chehabi, "Anatomy of Prejudice: Reflections on Secular anti-Baha'ism in Iran"; M. Tavakoli-Targhi, "Anti-Baha'i and Islamism in Iran"; and R. Afshari, "The Discourse and Practice of Human Rights Violations of Iranian Baha'is in the Islamic Republic of Iran," in *The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-Historical Studies*, ed. D. P. Brookshaw and S. B. Fazel (London: Routledge, 2008), 170–277.
 35. For an overtly critical treatment of the Qajar reformists, see H. Alger, *Mirza Malkum Khan* (Los Angeles and Berkeley: California University Press, 1973). For a corrective perspective see S. Bakhsh, *Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy, and Reform under the Qajars, 1858–1896* (London: Ithaca Press, 1978), and G. Nashat, *The Origins of Modern Reform in Iran, 1870–80* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982). Admittedly the narrative of decline and reawakening in the reformist discourse awaits a serious treatment. For an overview of identity debate in the Qajar period see also J. R. Cole, "Marking Boundaries, Marking Time: The Iranian Past and the Construction of the Self by Qajar Thinkers," *Iranian Studies* 29 (1996), 35–56. See *EIr*: "Iranian Identity: 19th and 20th Centuries" (by A. Ashraf).
 36. On gender roles and women in the Qajar period, see A. Najmabadi, *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), and J. Afary, *Sexual Politics in Modern Iran* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009). For Mahd-e 'Olya and Qajar matriarchy, see also Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, chaps. 2 and 4. For Qurrat al-'Ayn and her role in the Babi movement see Amanat, *Resurrection*, esp. chap. 7, and idem. *Qurrat al-'Ayn (Tabira): A Millennial Feminist*, in *Makers of the Muslim World* (Oxford: One World Publishing, 2012, forthcoming). On fascination with European women see M. Tavakoli-Targhi, *Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Historiography* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), chap. 4.
 37. One example is the case of Anis al-Dowleh. During Naser al-Din Shah's first European tour in 1873 one of his chief wives, Anis al-Dowleh—a woman of character and intelligence—was in the retinue. In St. Petersburg when she was expected to follow the European practice of appearing in the company of her husband, neither the shah nor his reformist grand vizier, Mirza Husayn Khan Moshir al-Dowleh, were prepared to tolerate the breach of the Islamic norm of female segregation, let alone unveiling. Despite Anis al-Dowleh's expressed desire to appear publicly and unveiled, she was forced overnight to return to Iran along with her female entourage. All-male royal tours remained the norm all through the Qajar and early Pahlavi eras. See *EIr*: "Anis al-Dawla" (G. Nashat).
 38. See A. Amanat, "Pur-e Khaqan va Andisheh-ye Bazyabi-e Tarikh-e Melli-e Iran," *Iran Nameh* (1999): 17:5–54. See also *EIr*, "Jalal al-Din Mirza" (A. Amanat and F. Vejdani). On the neo-Zoroastrian nationalism of the Safavid period and pure Persian style see M. Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, esp. chap. 5–6.
 39. On the emergence of nationalist awareness in the Constitutional period, see, for example, Nazem al-Islam Kermani, *Tarikh-e Bidari-ye Iranian*, 2nd ed., ed. 'A. A. Sa'idi Sirjani (Tehran, Bonyad-e Farhang-e Iran, Bonyad-e Farhang-e Iran, 1346–49/1967–70), esp. part. 1, vol. 1 (and included clandestine publication of the period). See also *EIr*: "Constitutional Revolution: Intellectual Background" (A. Amanat) and cited sources.

40. See B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso, 1983), esp. introduction and chap. 3. A close dialogue with Anderson's example is to be seen in Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*. For a somewhat undue emphasis on the role of Orientalism in shaping of national identity, see M. Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity* (New York: Marlowe and Company, 1994).
41. For cultural polices of early Pahlavi Iran, see, for example, A. Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and State, 1870–1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), esp. chap. 2–4; T. Atabaki and E. Zucher, *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2004), chaps. 8–9.
42. On historiography and state patronage in the early Pahlavi period, see *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture*, ed. T. Atabaki (London and New York, I. B. Tauris, 2009) esp. Tavakoli-Targhi, "Historiography and Crafting Iranian National Identity," 5–2; A. Amanat, "Memory and Amnesia in the Historiography of the Constitutional Revolution," 23–55; and A. Marashi, "The Nations Poet: Ferdowsi and the Iranian National Imagination," 63–112. See also *EI*: "Historiography: Pahlavi Period" (A. Amanat); F. Vejdani, "Purveyors of the Past: Iranian Historians and Nationalist Historiography, 1900–1941" (PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2009).
43. On the Iranian tribes' interaction with the state in the Qajar period and the Bakhtiari's incorporation to Iranian state through economy and communication, see A. Khazeni, *Tribes and Empire on the Margins of Nineteenth-Century Iran* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010). On the Pahlavi treatment of nomads and sedentarization polices, see S. Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State, 1921–1941* (London: Routledge, 2007). On early Pahlavi suppression of the popular protest and disciplining provincial notables, see idem, *Soldiers, Shahs, and Subalterns in Iran: Opposition Protest and Revolt, 1921–1941* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), esp. pt. 2, chap. 1 and 3. On state formation under Reza Shah, see also Atabaki and Zucher, *Men of Order*, chaps. 1 and 3.
44. On origins and development of conspiracy theories in Iran, see *EI*: "Conspiracy Theory" (A. Ashraf); E. Abrahamian, *Khomeinism: Essays on the Islamic Republic* (London, I. B. Tauris, 1993), chaps. 3–4; and H. Chehabi, "The Paranoid Style of Iranian Historiography" in Atabaki, ed., *Iran in the 20th Century*, 155–76.
45. "Editorial," *Kaveh*, 2nd series, no. 1 (Berlin, Jumada I, 1338/ 22 Jan. 1920).
46. On Al-e Ahmad and Occidentosis see A. Gheissari, *Iranian Intellectuals in the 20th Century* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), chap. 5, and M. Boroujerdi, *Iranian Intellectuals and the West: The Tormented Triumph of Nativism* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1996). See also R. Mottahedeh, *Mantle of the Prophet: Religion and Politics in Iran*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000), 287–315.
47. On the origins of the Great Satan see A. Amanat, "Khomeini's Great Satan: Demonizing the American Other in the Islamic Revolution in Iran," *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism*, 199–220.
48. The culture of war with Iraq and its social implications still awaits a thorough study. For some preliminary observations see F. Azimi, *The Quest for Democracy in Iran: A Century of Struggle against Authoritarian Rule* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 365–70, 376–79, and Dabashi, *Shi'ism*, 275–76, 314–15. On the significance of martyrdom and apocalyptic dimension, see also A. Amanat, *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism*, 67–69, 200–202.
49. For a study of Self and the Other see, for example, A. Ashraf, "The Crisis of National and Ethnic Identities in Contemporary Iran," *Iranian Studies* 26 (1993): 159–64, and G. Mehran, "The Presentation of 'Self' and the 'Other' in Postrevolutionary Iranian

- School Textbooks” in Keddie and Matthee, eds., *Iran and the Surrounding World*, 232–53.
50. See, for example, S. A. Arjomand, *After Khomeini: Iran under His Successors* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2009), esp. chaps. 3–4.
 51. For the statistics see M. Moaddel and T. Azadarmarki, “The Worldview of the Islamic Republic: The Cases in Egypt, Iran and Jordan,” in *Comparative Sociology* 1, nos. 3–4 (2002): 299–319, cited in *Elr*: “Iranian Identity IV: 19th and 20th Centuries” (A. Ashraf).
 52. See, for example, 'A. Shari'ati, *Bazshenasi-e Hoviyyat-e Irani-Eslami* (Tehran: 1361/1982), and M. Motaahhari, *Khadamat-e Motaqabel-e Islam va Iran*, 8th ed. (Qom: 1357/1978).
 53. S. Sepehri, *Hajm-e Sabz* (Tehran: Rowzan, 1346/1967), 71.

PART I

**THE LEGACY OF CULTURAL
EXCLUSION AND CONTESTED
MEMORIES**

CHAPTER 1

IRAN AND ANIRAN

THE SHAPING OF A LEGEND

DICK DAVIS

NOTIONS OF NATIONAL OR ETHNIC IDENTITY ARE virtually always conceived of in terms of the past; the assumption is that we are what the past bestows upon us and constrains us to be, and the past is used to validate the ways in which we conceive of our identity vis-à-vis those who, we claim, do not share it. In the importance given to the past when questions of identity are considered, the *Shahnameh* is, as it were, twice blessed: It is seen as the first major literary work of the Islamic period in Iranian history (and its immense influence has contributed much toward Iran's perceptions of the nature of its own continuing reality in the past thousand years), and it is also the chief means by which the mythology and history of pre-Islamic Iran entered the national consciousness. And although it is true that, within Iran, in the past hundred years or so, the history of pre-Islamic Iran has been substantially rewritten from other sources, our sense of its legendary and mythological legacy has been much less altered, and is still perceived, by most people who are interested in the subject, largely in the terms set out by the *Shahnameh*. This dual status—as the first major literary work of the Islamic period and as the virtually sole custodian of the narratives of the pre-Islamic period—has given the *Shahnameh* an almost iconic significance in discussions of Iranian identity. It does not seem too exaggerated a claim, to say that the *Shahnameh* is popularly seen as the repository of a quintessential “Iranian-ness,” or “Persian-ness,” which cannot be found elsewhere. In this chapter I wish briefly to examine the picture of this Iranian-ness as it is presented in the poem.

It is easy to let one's mind be seduced by the sonorous rhetoric of this great work, and of course this is not a wholly bad thing; the seduction of the listener's mind, the willing suspension of disbelief, is precisely what sonorous rhetoric aims to accomplish. The nobility and grandeur of the poem's language in its most famous episodes, its epic directness and openness, which appear to embody both indomitable strength and an unstinting generosity of spirit, can be, and are clearly meant to be, irresistible. But paying even cursory attention to the poem's narratives

demonstrates that any notion of “Iranian-ness” as it is presented in the poem is not at all a simple condition that can be summed up in a rhetorical flourish. We quickly see that notions of an Iranian identity, as they are embodied in the *Shahnameh*, are complicated, and often apparently self-contradictory, and that they strongly resist attempts to essentialize the concept.

Although perhaps everyone would agree that the word “Iran” does not refer merely to a geographical concept, nevertheless it does, in the modern world, refer *at the least* to a geographical entity, whatever else it might refer to as well. How far does the geography of modern Iran correspond to the implied geography of the *Shahnameh*? As most people who possess even a superficial acquaintance with the poem will know, the answer is “not very closely.”

There are in reality three separate geographical “Irans,” or centers of Iran, designated in the *Shahnameh*. I think all scholars now accept that the legendary stories of the poem are largely Parthian in origin (some may well be older, the legend of Rostam in particular suggests pre-Parthian, and perhaps, as Mehrdad Bahar¹ has indicated, Indian, antecedents that have been incorporated into a Parthian cycle of narratives), and the Iran of the legendary *Shahnameh* is clearly located in the Parthian homeland, or close to it. That is, in northeastern Iran, and including the historical Khurasan as far north and east as the cities of Bokhara and Samarqand, and so reaching beyond the Oxus into Transoxiana. Southern Iran, in particular the named towns and areas of Fars, which was historically the seat of two of the three great pre-Islamic dynasties, is virtually unmentioned in the poem’s first half. Most of the few identifiable places that are mentioned in the poem’s legendary section (the Oxus and Helmand Rivers as well as the cities of Balkh, Kabul, and Marv) are not within the confines of modern Iran. But apart from ascribing the Iran of the legendary stories to the general Parthian area, it is very hard to be more specific about its geography. The Oxus and the Helmand as there mainly as borders, with Turan and with Sistan, respectively, and what is within these borders is left extremely vague. The western border remains entirely undefined, and in fact during its legendary section, the *Shahnameh* and its characters look emphatically and fairly constantly north and east. We never learn the name of the capital of Iran, or where its site might be, during this legendary section, and this may be because the stories derive from an era when there was not a central settled city as such, but rather a general vast area in which nomadic tribes pastured their transhumant flocks. Strangely enough we do learn the name of the capital of Iran’s enemy, Turan, which is referred to as “Gang Dezh,” although the site of this town, if it was a town, has never been historically identified. The geography of the legendary *Shahnameh* then is defined largely by its borders, which place it in present-day Khurasan, western Afghanistan, and central Asia, but we have virtually no indication of what was thought to be within those borders.

The notorious absence of the Achaemenids from the *Shahnameh*, at least until the generation before the advent of Sekandar from the west, has ensured that their homeland scarcely figures in the poem’s first half. It is only just before the arrival of Sekandar that we hear with any frequency about Estakhr² for example, and it is in this city that the victorious Sekandar is ultimately crowned king of Persia. When the Persian King Dara is defeated in battle his family flees for refuge to Isfahan, and Kerman, as the place where the defeated Dara himself flees before being killed by two of his own retainers, also enters the poem at this point. It is during this period

too that Ahvaz begins to figure in some of the narratives. This area, centering on Estakhr in Fars and bounded in the west by Ahvaz, in the north by Isfahan, and in the east by Kerman, is the “Iran” of the period between the death of Rostam and the beginning of the Sasanian era—that is, from the legendary period to the end of Parthian rule, an era that Ferdowsi skates over in a few pages. This is of course a quite different “Iran,” geographically, as well as in numerous other ways, from the legendary Iran of the poem’s earlier sections.

With the appearance of the Sasanians this transitional Iran is not so much forgotten (as the legendary Iran had been during the transitional period) as superseded in importance. The center of interest becomes the west, beyond the western border of present-day Iran, in Mesopotamia. This becomes the site of the Sasanian capital, Ctesiphon, and it is Mesopotamia’s western and southern borders that begin to preoccupy the Persian kings as sources of military threat. In the Sasanian period, despite the long interlude of the history of Bahram Chubineh, which involves China and attacks from the north and east, Iran and its kings, in the main, looked emphatically west, and then, with the threat from the Arab invaders, south and west, rather than north and east as had been the case in the poem’s opening sections. There is an intermittent consciousness of the reality of other parts of Iran (Rey, for example, is mentioned quite frequently), but what matters most is the west and threats of war from the west. It is true to say that in the Sasanian period most of what we now think of, geographically, as Iran or greater Iran, seems to be at least intermittently included in the poem’s concept of Iran, as well as of course a great deal more that is not included within the borders of the present-day country; nevertheless it is still the case that the geography of Iran, in the *Shahnameh*, is an equivocal category, one that, in general, can be said to shift from the north and east to the center and the south, and thence to the west. In the poem’s opening stories the central area of concern is outside of Iran’s present borders, around the Oxus, and at its end the central area of concern is again outside of these borders, on the Tigris.

If we cannot rely on the geography of the poem to give us an unequivocal notion of a unitary Iranian identity, what of the *Shahnameh*’s concern with ethnicity, its much vaunted preoccupation with matters of *gowhar* and *nezhad*? Well, despite the frequent invocations of the importance of lineage and family that occur throughout the poem, the details of the *Shahnameh*’s legendary narratives quickly dispose of any notions of ethnic purity as being a prerequisite of an Iranian identity.

A glance at the most admired king and the most admired hero of the poem’s mythological and legendary sections is enough to confirm this. Kay Khosrow is presented as the paradigmatically perfect king of the prehistorical sections of the work (i.e., before the advent of Sekandar from the west). Kay Khosrow’s father is Seyavash, whose own father is the Iranian king Kay Kavus. So far so good, if we are looking for a purely Iranian ethnic identity, at least as far as Kay Khosrow’s paternal grandfather goes. But his paternal grandmother is a fugitive from Turan who claims to be related to Garsivaz and thus to Turan’s king, Afrasyab. When we look at his maternal genealogy, we see that Kay Khosrow’s mother is Farigis, the daughter of Afrasyab, and though we know nothing of Farigis’s own mother—that is, of Kay Khosrow’s maternal grandmother—it seems we can assume that she too was from Turan (if she were from Iran, we would surely have been told this). And so we see that Kay Khosrow, the paradigmatically perfect Iranian king of the poem’s first half, only has one indisputably Iranian grandparent; the other three are from Turan, the

perpetual enemy of Iran from the death of Feraydun until the advent of Sekandar. As Kay Khosrow himself says,

Beh yek su chu kavus daram nia / digar su chu tur, an por az kimia
Chu kavus o chun jadu afrasyab / keh joz ru-ye kazhi nabinad beh kh'ab³
 ("On one side I have Kavus as an ancestor / on the other Tur, who was full of fraud /
 On the one hand Kavus, and on the other the magician Afrasyab /
 who in his dreams sees nothing but the face of evil").

The preeminent hero of the poem is of course Rostam, and Rostam's genealogy is, if one's gold standard is a purely Iranian family tree, even more ethnically dubious. His parents are the Sistani hero Zal and the Kaboli princess Rudابه. When Zal is born, his father exposes him on a mountainside to die because of his white hair and mottled skin, and he is brought up by a fabulous magical bird, the Simorgh. The implication is that there is something demonic about Zal's appearance, and indeed there is only one other figure in the *Shahnameh* who is described as having white hair and a mottled skin, the White Demon of Mazandaran, whom Rostam kills in single combat (and who almost kills him). When Zal has returned to the human world the Simorgh remains his protector, and she is later on (through Zal as intermediary) the protector of his son Rostam; in their ability to call on her aid in moments of extreme peril they are given access to magical powers. The supernatural as part of Rostam's inheritance, again in somewhat demonic guise, is even more evident on his mother's side: Rudابه's father is Mehrab, the king of Kabol, who is descended from the demon king, Zahhak. Zal's father Sam at first opposes his son's marriage to Rudابه, and says:

Az in morgh parvardeh v'an divzad / cheh guneh bar ayad, cheh gui, nezhad?⁴
 ("[Coming from] this man raised by a bird and from that demon born child /
 how do you think his lineage will turn out?").

And similarly, when King Manuchehr first hears of Zal's proposed marriage to Rudابه, he too opposes it, since it will mingle the demonic bloodline of Zahhak with that of the Sistani heroes (and Rostam is the result of just such a mingling). As he says,

Chun az dokht-e mehrab o ze pur-e sam / bar ayad yeki tigh niz az niam
Beyksu nah az gohar-e ma bovad / chu taryak ba zahr hamta bovad?⁵
 (From this daughter of Mehrab and this son of Sam /
 a sword will be drawn from its scabbard / On one side he will not be from our people /
 how can poison be together with its antidote?)

Rostam is descended from a demon on his mother's side, and his father's strange upbringing and appearance also bring with them an aura of the supernatural and perhaps the demonic. Rostam is a great subduer of demons, but as with another Persian hero (and king this time) Jamshid, whose authority over demons seems at times to come as much from his participation in their world as his defeat of it, there is a suggestion of "set a thief to catch a thief" about Rostam's prowess.

What we see in both Kay Khosrow's and Rostam's family trees is that, in their genealogies at least, the non-Iranian is not something that one simply defines

oneself over against; it is also something that has been folded into one's own identity before one is even born and is part and parcel of it. Rostam's lineage is as much, if not more, demonic than it is Iranian; Kay Khosrow's lineage derives as much from the hated and despised royal line of Turan as it does from that of Iran. In the same way that Rostam's genealogy incorporates the bloodline of Zahhak, so Kay Khosrow's genealogy incorporates that of Afrasyab. These two evil figures, as they are presented in the poem, Zahhak and Afrasyab, are the two most baleful threats to the Iranian people and their well-being during the poem's mythological and legendary narratives; and yet much of the *gowhar* and *nezhad* of the poem's greatest king and its greatest hero derive directly from them. So much for ethnic purity.

It will be noticed that in both the family trees I have glanced at so far, it is through the mother that the alien and non-Iranian is incorporated into the king's or hero's identity. This is so throughout the poem, and it is especially notable in the poem's mythological and legendary sections. Virtually all the named women in these sections are non-Iranians; they are from India, from Turan, from Rum, or from Hamaveran, which may or may not be identifiable with the Yemen (but it's certainly not within Iran). Sindokht, Rudabeh, Sudabeh, Farigis, Manizheh, Katayun—these are all, in Iranian terms, “foreigners,” and, with the signal exception of Sudabeh, all of them are positively presented despite their foreign origins and the evil associations of some of their ancestors or living relatives. The first time we meet her, even Sudabeh, who assumes an unambiguously evil role in the story of Seyavash, is a positive figure like Rudabeh and Manizheh, who defies her non-Persian father to be faithful to the Persian whom she loves.

Clearly, I think, one reason for this welcoming of foreign brides into the Iranian tribal confederation, is that marriage alliances are being presented as metaphors for, and manifestations of, suzerainty and conquest. In the same way that, in a text that derives from the periods when the stories of the *Shahnameh* evolved and were written down, women were ipso facto seen as subservient to their husbands and therefore as the inferior partners of the marriage, so in a miscegenetic marriage the ethnicity the wife derives from is seen as subservient, and inferior, to that of her husband. This certainly fits the imperial agenda of the poem, which sees the Iranian polity as superior to all others, and the husbands are therefore Iranians while the wives are foreigners. Confirmatory evidence for this lies in the fact that whenever, in the legendary section of the poem at least, the ethnic and gender relationships are reversed, the union is presented as rape, not consensual marriage—this is the case with the marriage of Jamshid's daughters (sisters in some versions) to Zahhak and the marriage of Goshtasp's daughters to the Turanian king and hero Arjasp, and it is incumbent on these abducted brides' male relatives to rescue them.

Such imperial claims and metaphors may well occupy the conceptual foreground of the marriage alliances celebrated in the poem, but the presence of so many foreign wives, and then, inevitably, of so many foreign mothers, produces an almost unavoidable subtext. It is the foreign that, quite literally, gives birth to the poem's heroes. Rostam, Sohrab, Seyavash, Esfandiyar all have foreign mothers, as does Kay Khosrow, the legendary king we are most unequivocally invited to admire. And when we examine this list we see something even more surprising: if the foreigner gives birth to these heroes, it is the Iranian—their own as it were—who either directly destroys them or more obliquely ensures their destruction. Rostam famously kills his son Sohrab, Rostam himself is killed by his brother

Shaghad, Esfandiyar is sent by his father to bring Rostam to the court in chains after he has been told by his court astrologer that this will ensure Esfandiyar's death, which occurs at Rostam's hands, and Seyavash is so shabbily treated by his father Kay Kavus that he flees to Turan, where he is eventually put to death. Even Kay Khosrow, who it is implied never dies, incurs the wrath of his subjects when he announces that he will abdicate and disappears on a mountaintop, in a snowstorm, as a once and future king. To this list we can add two important historical kings whose deaths mark moments of major *translatio imperii*, both of which are recorded in the *Shahnameh*; both Dara, defeated by Sekandar, and Yazdegerd III, defeated by the victorious Arab armies, flee east before the invaders, only to be murdered by their own people. We are left with a peculiar paradox: The foreign gives life to the poem's heroes and national representatives, and the Iranian deprives them of life or harries them until they are driven out of life by other forces. This is a very strange fact for a poem that supposedly celebrates notions of Iranian identity over against the foreign identities with which it is in conflict.

I would like to stay with Rostam for a while: Is he Iranian or not, and if he is, can he be seen as a model of what an Iranian identity should be, or, in some ideal sense, is? I have already remarked on his at best dubiously Iranian lineage as it is presented in the poem, and the lineage of his legend would in all likelihood lead us even further afield.

Geographically Rostam belongs in Sistan, his family's appanage, granted in perpetuity by the Persian kings for their loyalty to the throne. The area may have been granted by the kings, but when Rostam is uneasy with the political goings-on at the Persian court, it is to this area that he retreats, where he is beyond the reach of the king unless he wishes to present himself of his own free will.

The modern Sistan, the southeastern province of Iran, does not of course correspond with Zal's and Rostam's kingdom, which lies largely to the east of this area, in what is now the province of Helmand in Afghanistan. The river Helmand (called, in Ferdowsi's time, the Hirmand) marks the northern border of their territory. Rostam's land is therefore on the eastern edge of the Iranian world. His mother, as we have said, is from Kabul, and Rostam dies in Kabul, placing his origin and death even further to the east; indeed, in the terms of the *Shahnameh* placing them in India, as Kabul is seen as a part of India throughout the *Shahnameh*. There are other indications of a strong Indian presence in Rostam's identity; the talismanic tiger skin he wears instead of armor, the *babr-e bayan* as it is called in Persian, has been traced to an Indian origin by the scholar Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh,⁶ and another eminent scholar of the *Shahnameh*, Mehrdad Bahar, has pointed out that some aspects of Rostam's legend parallel and may derive from those of the Hindu gods Indra and Krishna.⁷ Sistan, Kabul, India—certainly, if we take Iran as the center, Rostam hails geographically from the edge and, significantly enough, from the eastern edge. Significantly because the lands immediately to the east of Iran are seen as the origin of magic in the *Shahnameh*, and this eastern aspect of his identity further ties Rostam to that demonic and chthonic world his parentage implies.

Often Rostam's heroism too has an "edgy," unstraightforward, quality to it. The supernatural Simorgh on whose help he can rely, as well as the tiger skin he wears, both suggest characteristics of the Trickster Hero, as he is found in many cultures. Tricksters are often associated with magic, and they have something of the shaman about them, one who is in touch with other worlds, often through an animal

intermediary, and is able to call the denizens of these worlds to his and his people's aid. Many tricksters are associated with specific animals whose skins or feathers they wear in order to draw on the animal's characteristics for their own purposes. The animals so used are usually known for their slyness, or they are birds. Rostam is protected by the feathers of a fabulous bird, and he wears a tiger skin, and slyness is exactly the quality associated with tigers in Indian lore (e.g., in Buddhist Jataka tales: there is a distant echo of this in Kipling's Shere Khan in *The Jungle Book*). And of course the preeminent characteristic of the Trickster Hero is that he plays tricks in order to win his victories. Rostam wins many of his victories by simple derring-do, by his martial valor, and by his manly strength alone, but in a number of his encounters with enemies, and almost always when he is in real danger, he resorts to trickery. In his encounter with a monstrous demon, the Akvan Div, "Rostam realized . . . that it would be cunning he would have to call on, not strength"; when he enters enemy territory to rescue the imprisoned hero Bizhan he says, "the key to these chains is deceit," and he proceeds by subterfuge; and in his most famous combat of all, that with his son Sohrab, he tricks the young man into letting him go when he is at his mercy. He wins his last victory, against Esfandiyar, by the ultimate trickery of utilizing supernatural forces against his enemy. He is most deeply identified with the role of trickster at his death.

Tricksters attract tricks as well as perpetrate them, and Rostam is killed by two related tricks: He is lured under false pretences to Kabol, and he falls into a disguised pit where he and his horse, Rakhsh, are pierced by the stakes that await them. And Rostam then tricks the man who has betrayed him in such a way that, as he dies, so too does his betrayer. Rostam dies enmeshed in trickery, both tricked and in the act of tricking the man whose dupe he has become. There is also the curious nature of his name to be taken into account. He is often referred to as "Rostam-e Dastan," which can of course have two different meanings. One, "Rostam the son of Dastan," is the meaning the poem foregrounds, and his father, Zal, is seen as having somewhere along the line acquired a second name, Dastan. But the phrase can also mean "Rostam who possesses the quality of *dastan*," and the word "*dastan*" means "trickery." This, I believe, was the original meaning of the phrase "Rostam-e Dastan" (probably long before the *Shahnameh* was written, while the stories of Rostam still had a solely oral existence)—that is, "Rostam the Trickster," the equivalent of Homer's "Odysseus of Many Wiles"—and only later did the word *dastan* come to be identified as the name of his father (after all, his father already had a name: Zal).

Although Rostam is seen as the great prop of the Iranian throne, and this is how he is constantly invoked and remembered in the poem, both during his own lifetime and after his death, his trickster nature suggests a more complex relationship with the center of Iranian regal power. He is often unwilling to come to his kings' aid; he becomes exasperated with the imperial court, he storms from Kavus' presence in fury; and when Lohrasp becomes king he refuses to travel to his court to pay homage to him, as he also does when Lohrasp's son, Goshtasp, becomes king. A little probing reveals this uneasy relationship between Rostam and the Iranian kings throughout virtually every story in which he is involved, but it becomes irrefutably obvious during his confrontation with Esfandiyar.

Here the reader does a kind of astonished double take when they realize that the "enemy" (*doshman*), which Rostam describes as being encamped on his borders

is the Iranian army; Rostam at this point explicitly says that the forces of Iran are his enemies. Now one might think that this is due to the ironies and exigencies of this particular story, except that this is not an isolated moment in his family's history; Rostam has two sons, Sohrab and Faramarz, and both of them, at different moments, conduct military campaigns against, not on behalf of, the forces of Iran. The curious fact that Rostam's climactic battle is against an Iranian crown prince leading an Iranian army and that both of his sons (Sohrab and Faramarz) are also to be found fighting against, rather than for, different Iranian monarchs suggests that at least part of Rostam's legend incorporates elements from stories associated with a hero and a family from "the other side" as it were—that is, they are concerned with someone who fought against, rather than on behalf of, the Iranian polity.

This, or something like it, seems to be confirmed by Rostam's relationship with Zoroastrianism. Although Ferdowsi in his *Shahnameh* plays down any such suggestions, a number of other texts that preceded the *Shahnameh* or are more or less contemporary with it state that Rostam emphatically rejected the "new" religion of Zoroastrianism, and this was the reason for his break with Goshtasp's court. This is the account as it is given in Dinavari's *History*, in the anonymous Arab history *Nihayat al-irab fi Akhbar al-Furs wa al-'Arab*, in the *Tarikh-e Sistan*, and in the populist compendium of knowledge, the *'Aja'eb Nameh*. All these texts say essentially what Dinavari says, so I will let his text speak for the group:

When he heard news of Boshtasef's [i.e., Goshtasp's] becoming a Zoroastrian, and that he had left the faith of his fathers, he [Rostam] became extremely angry about this matter and said, "He has abandoned the faith of our fathers, which has come down to us as an inheritance from former times, and turned to a new faith" And he collected the men of Sistan together and recommended that Boshtasef be dethroned, and openly incited them against Boshtasef, who summoned his son Esfandyar [Esfandiyar], the strongest man of his time, and said to him, "I shall soon give you the throne, and there will be no more tasks for you, except that you kill Rostam."⁸

Ferdowsi is not alone in his account of the split between Goshtasp's court and Rostam, since his version is essentially that of Tabari and Tha'alebi, but theirs were not the only versions current. Although mainstream "universal history" texts like Tabari's tend to support the view of the conflict between Rostam and Esfandiyar as one that was largely to do with lineage and royal *amour propre*, which is what Ferdowsi's says it was about, more marginal texts suggest that the clash was also seen as a specifically religious one, provoked by Rostam's rejection of Zoroastrianism. Cumulatively, there seems to be strong evidence that Rostam was not in origin a Zoroastrian hero, and that, despite Sasanian efforts to co-opt him to the cause, he continued to be perceived by many as a figure who emphatically rejected Zoroastrianism. It is not I think an exaggeration to see in him the *Shahnameh*'s last shadowy representative of a magical and animist pre-Zoroastrian, and perhaps "pre-Iranian," world, one that disappears forever with his death.

It is probably clear from what I have said so far that I think it is very hard to extract an idea of a unitary Iranian identity from the mythological and legendary sections of the *Shahnameh*. On the contrary, we see in these sections' stories a society that embodies constant internal contradictions and conflicts; that has an

extremely porous rather than simply oppositional relationship with surrounding cultures, incorporating as much as it excludes; and that is vitalized by the edge, even by the demonic and nonhuman edge, never mind by the non-Iranian edge, as much as by the imperial center. If there is a unity to be found in these tales it is a unity of diversity, of *disunity* we can say, rather than of a single geographic area, or of a single bloodline, or of a single tribe, or of a single court to which all pay unequivocal homage, or of a single religious tradition. Such imagined singular unities, at least in the first half of the *Shahnameh*, are often not invoked at all, and when they are invoked they tend to be there as fantastic ideals rather than as tangible realities.

Why then should the *Shahnameh* be seen as the repository of a uniquely Iranian identity, if it in fact includes such disparateness, and so much incorporation of the non-Iranian within its structure? I think the answer lies largely in Ferdowsi's handling of his material, in so far as we can perceive it. For example, I have just mentioned that a number of texts indicate that Rostam was not a Zoroastrian hero at all, but one who emphatically rejected Zoroastrianism and was seen as the last representative of a pre-, and ultimately, anti-Zoroastrian civilization. Ferdowsi never mentions this version of Rostam's legend, although it seems impossible that he was unaware of it (e.g., he apparently draws extensively on Dinavari's history, or on a source that Dinavari also knew, in his portrayal of Bahram Chubineh, and it is the anti-Zoroastrian Rostam whose story Dinavari tells), and this seems to be typical of Ferdowsi's strategies generally. His method, as far as we can glean it from his poem, is always to emphasize unity and continuity within the Iranian polity and its history, rather than diversity, discord, and disjunctive new starts. He is very keen to imply that Rostam has no quarrel with Zoroastrianism, and he is almost equally keen to imply that Zoroastrianism has very little quarrel with Islam (as when he tells the reader that when Kay Kavus and Kay Khosrow pray before fire this merely indicates that fire was their *mehrab* and that the reader would be quite mistaken to believe that these Iranian kings were *atash parast*).⁹

We can perceive the diversity and discord because they are embedded deep within the narratives that Ferdowsi recounts, but they are not his emphases or where he directs our attention. Many of Ferdowsi's kings act extremely stupidly or unethically, and it is precisely the ones about whom he writes at the greatest length that do so, and yet the popular characterization of the poem as one that self-consciously celebrates the glories of Iranian kingship is not wholly incorrect; there are many passages in the poem that do exactly this, despite the fact that the poem gives great prominence to a number of monarchs who are either incompetent or wicked or both. In the same way, the lineage of the poem's heroes is often only tangentially Iranian, as I have indicated, but the glories of having the correct *gowhar* and *nezhad* are constantly referred to throughout the *Shahnameh*. Again, although Rostam quarrels violently with a number of his kings, he is almost always invoked, and invariably after his death, as the great unquestioning prop and savior of the Iranian monarchy.

A particularly glaring example of this insistence on unity in the face of the narratives' own contrary evidence can be found in the poem's treatment of Zoroastrianism. Iran cannot logically have been Zoroastrian until the appearance of Zoroaster, and yet the *Zend Avesta* and Zoroastrian concepts like Ahriman and Ahura Mazda, are constantly invoked before Zoroaster's appearance at the court of Goshtasp toward the end of the poem's mythological and legendary sections, so

that pre-Zoroastrian Iran is by implication made Zoroastrian *avant la lettre*. And as I have just suggested, the possibility that the poem's greatest hero was not in fact a Zoroastrian at all is quietly, as it were, swept under the carpet. The insistence on Iran's perpetual Zoroastrian heritage becomes particularly explicit in the Sasanian, quasi-historical section of the poem, where the implication is that Iran has always, from the beginning of time, been Zoroastrian and that there has never been a religious conflict within its existence as a historical entity. For example, when Anushirvan's son Nushzad abandons Zoroastrianism for Christianity he is accused of abandoning "the faith of Keyumars, Hushang and Tahmures" (i.e., the faith of the "Pishdadian," the very earliest kings, who according to the poem itself lived long before the advent of Zoroaster).¹⁰

And here, I suggest, we see what is going on. It is, very largely, the Sasanian version of what Iran is and has been that Ferdowsi is endeavoring to present to us, despite the often contradictory details of the narratives of his poem's first half. Sasanian Iran, as it is presented in the poem, is politically a much more monolithic entity than the legendary Iran of the time of Zal and Rostam; it contains no suggestion of independent centers of political power; no contumacious families and heroes that might or might not give their allegiance to the central authority (Bahram Chubineh seems an exception, but he comes to a bad end, and when he does so his loyal sister Gordyeh says, in effect, "I told you so."¹¹); and no Sistan or Rostam. This cultural homogeneity is even more clearly obvious when we consider the role of women in the poem's quasi-historical second half. I remarked previously that virtually all the named women of the poem's legendary section are non-Iranians and that they are welcomed into the Iranian polity; exogamous marriage is the order of the day in the legendary *Shahnameh*, with all the inclusion of the foreign that this inevitably entails. But exogamic marriages are regarded with great suspicion in the Sasanian stories, and when foreign women appear in the second half they are much less welcome than they had been in the legendary narratives. In the poem's earlier sections the fact that most of the narratives' major heroes have foreign mothers, does not prevent them from being seen as great exemplars of Persian virtues, and miscegenation is an accepted and generally welcomed fact. But miscegenation is regarded with deep suspicion in the poem's second half, and that Hormozd has a Chinese/Central Asian mother and Shirui, a Byzantine mother, is seen in each case as a distinct negative. Sima-ye Borzin says of Hormozd, "*keh in torkzadeh sazavar nist / beshahi kas u-ra kharidar nist*" (This man descended from Turks is not worthy [of the throne]; no one wants him as king).¹² Similarly, Khosrow Parviz describes his son Shirui as *bad-gowhar* (of evil lineage), and it is clear from the context that it is the boy's mother's non-Persian lineage to which he is referring: "*keh in bad-gowhar ta ze madar bezad . . .*" (Since this child of evil-lineage was born from his mother . . .).¹³ The implicit preference in the historical section is for emphatic endogamy, although Ferdowsi is clearly embarrassed by the pre-Islamic laws that encouraged marriages within the immediate family, as is evident from his treatment of the daughter-father/Homay-Bahman marriage and the way that he glosses over something earlier historians unequivocally recorded: that the most famous woman of the Sasanian section, Gordyeh, was married to her brother, Bahram Chubineh.

Here at last then, in the poem's relatively obscure later narratives (certainly they are much less well-known than the legendary tales of the poem's opening), we do have something that apparently approaches the notion of Iranian identity as it is

popularly supposed to appear in the *Shahnameh*. We have a politically unified country under one king who rules over an area approximately coextensive with what is referred to as greater Iran; we have religious homogeneity as well as political unity; and in Ardeshir's famous formulation the monarchy and the religious establishment are seen as mutually supportive siblings. The ideal marriage is endogamous rather than exogamous, the foreign is looked on with suspicion, and something like racial and ethnic purity is held up as an ideal even when it is not always practiced. There is, it is true, the curious fact that Sasan, the founder of the Sasanian Dynasty, is given two entirely different lineages at different moments in the poem, but both can be traced back to a Persian king, albeit to different Persian kings. Frequently, in the legendary section, we see these ideals as it were exported back into the earlier tales, but with, as I have suggested, only varying degrees of success.

We can end though with what I believe is one very successful such exporting back. The poem is framed by two stories that suggest a fairly unequivocal hostility to Arab culture, if not to the religion that the Arabs brought with them at the conquest. No one can read the prophecy of Rostam Pur-e Hormozd at the poem's end and believe that Ferdowsi treats the Arab conquest sympathetically. Similarly, the tale of Zakhak at the poem's opening suggests outright hostility toward Arab culture. Zakhak is the first evil human being in the poem (previous evil entities are *divs* or otherwise supernatural) and Ferdowsi informs us that he is an Arab, one of the *nizeh-gozaran*. Interestingly enough, Zakhak has a somewhat less lurid presence in other sources that refer to him, and although Ferdowsi was not the first to identify Zakhak as an Arab, he was perhaps the first to make this a central fact as a way of structuring Iran's historical narrative, so introducing what is probably a wholly late- (and perhaps post-) Sasanian perspective into a legendary era. The oppressor of Iran, the potential destroyer of its people and its heritage, turns out to be not Turan, or India, or China, or even the demonic world, which had been the constantly evoked adversaries of the poem's legendary narratives, but a man who comes from Arab stock. By this apparent sleight of hand it is the Arabs who become the ultimate Other, over against which Iranian culture seeks to define itself, at the poem's beginning as at its end. But as a whole, the legendary stories tell us a far more complicated, more interesting, more nuanced, and perhaps truer tale.

NOTES

1. Mehrdad Bahar has written extensively on the composite nature of the legendary part of the *Shahnameh*, including the narratives concerned with Rostam; perhaps his most thorough discussion of the subject is in Mehrdad Bahar, "Ta'asir-e hokumat-e kushanha dar tashkil-e hemaseh-ye melli-ye Iran," in *Az ostureh ta tarikh* (Tehran: Nashr-e cheshmeh, AH 1376/1997), 225–51.
2. There is an earlier mention of Estakhr, during the legendary *Shahnameh*, when Kay Qobad travels there to die, but this is so anomalous at this point in the poem that it looks like a back-projection from a later period.
3. *Shahnameh*, ed. Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1994), 4, 327, 2446–47.
4. *Ibid.*, I, 208, 665.
5. *Ibid.*, I, 221, 847–48.
6. Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, *Gol-e ranjha-ye kohan* (Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, AH 1372/1993), 275–336.

7. Bahar, op. cit. 236–39, 248, 441.
8. Dinavari, *Al-akhbar al-tawil* (Cairo: Nashr-e Nay, 1960), 25. See also the Persian translation of the *Akhbar al-tawil* by Dr. Mahmud Mahdavi-Damghani (Tehran: Nashr-e Nay, AH 1364/1985), 50.
9. *Shahnameh*, ed. Khaleghi-Motlagh, IV, 312, 2216–17.
10. *Shahnameh*, ed. Bertels et al. (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Nauka, 1970), VIII, 105, 893.
11. Ferdowsi's relatively sympathetic treatment of Bahram Chubineh (he is the only unsuccessful rebel against the Persian throne whom Ferdowsi deals with in this way) is perhaps connected with the fact that Ferdowsi's initial patrons, the Samanid princes of Khorasan, claimed descent from him.
12. *Shahnameh*, ed. Bertels et al., VIII, 326, 179.
13. *Ibid.*, IX, 248, 3988.

CHAPTER 2

REDRAWING THE BOUNDARIES OF 'AJAM IN EARLY MODERN PERSIAN LITERARY HISTORIES

SUNIL SHARMA

INTRODUCTION: IRANIAN VERSUS PERSIAN LITERARY HISTORY

MODERN SCHOLARLY HISTORIES OF PERSIAN LITERATURE HAVE usually been the history of Iranian Persian literature, rather than of the larger Persianate world, where literary history is the story of the nation.¹ One of the earliest of these in English is the monumental four-volume work by the eminent Persianist E. G. Browne (d. 1926).² Ranging from pre-Islamic Iran to his own time, Browne established the parameters of his project right in the first paragraph of the first volume of his work:

This book, as its title implies, is a history, not of the different dynasties which have ruled in Persia and of the kings who composed those dynasties, but of the Persian people. It is, moreover, the history of that people written from a particular point of view—the literary, that is to say, the religious, intellectual, and aesthetic—characteristics of the Persians as manifested in their own writings, or sometimes, when these fail, in those of their neighbours. It is not, however, precisely a history of Persian Literature; since, on the one hand, it will exclude from consideration the writings of those who, while using the Persian language as the vehicle of their thought, were not of Persian race; and, on the other hand, it will include what has been written by Persians who chose as their medium of expression some language other than their mother-tongue.³

A history of the Iranian nation is mapped onto the history of literature and excludes anything that falls outside this unless it has a direct bearing on the literary culture

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of Iran. At the time Browne was writing, the name Persia was in common use in English, rather than Iran, the latter coming into use after Reza Shah made it official in 1935. Thus if Browne were writing a literary history of Persian (rather than of Persia) it should correctly have been the literary history of New Persian, a language that was not the exclusive claim of one nation. However, there are instances when Browne cannot avoid references to the Persian literature of Central and South Asia, as in the case of the Samanids and Ghaznavids whose centers of literary production were located in “greater Iran,” and then also when he writes about the literary culture of the Safavid period and emigration of poets to India. Browne’s views were not completely that of an outsider but were informed by Persian sources produced across the larger Persianate world. Thus the process by which the study of Persian literature became the study of Iranian Persian literature in the early modern period is worth examining, especially so since the complex relationship between Iran and its erstwhile Persianate regions “facilitated the renaissance and canonization of classical Persian literature.”⁴

In this chapter I would like to identify the early modern precursors for this circumscribed view of literary history, which very decisively shaped the modern view of Persian literature and ultimately led to the views expounded by the Iranian poet laureate Mohammad Taqi Bahar (1886–1951) with his stylistic and chronological classification of the different schools (*sabks*) of poetry, although my investigation does not extend to his period.⁵ The pioneering work of historians such as Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, and Afsaneh Najmabadi has recovered missing facets in the full understanding of Iranian modernity and are of great use to those taking a literary approach to this problem.

In the early centuries of the New Persian millennium, according to Muzaffar Alam, “Persian symbolized ‘*Ajam*’s endeavor to conquer the Arabs culturally,” and the term was used widely in a variety of texts for a region with elastic boundaries.⁶ Without going out of use completely in the intervening centuries,⁷ in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century the concept of ‘*Ajam*’ (or Persianate world) came to be in vogue for a brief period, perhaps because the literary domain defined by this term was being negotiated by intellectuals and litterateurs inside and outside Iran. The central texts in the historical understanding of the shifting boundary of ‘*Ajam*’ were biographical dictionaries (*tazkerehs*) that also formed the basis for many of the earliest accounts of Persian literary histories, both those produced in the West and in the Persianate world. For instance, the Austrian scholar Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall’s (d. 1856) *Die schönen Redekünste Persiens mit einer Blüthenlese aus zweyhundert persischen Dichtern* (1818) used as his source the Timurid source *Tazkerat al-Sho’ara* by Dowlatshah (completed in 1487).⁸ Nineteenth-century literary histories of Persian were themselves essentially biographical dictionaries-cum-anthologies, and they did not make any claims to present a comprehensive narrative of the literature. In the case of Sir Gore Ouseley (d. 1844) who had spent time both in India and in Iran, his posthumous work, *Biographical Notices of Persian Poets* (1846) included Persian poets of all periods and parts of ‘*Ajam*’ without any national attribution and his selection appears to be random.⁹ Classical works on prosody were also the inspiration behind modern works, such as Henry Blochmann’s *The Prosody of the Persians* (Calcutta, 1872), which was based on the poetic treatises of the Timurid poets Jami (d. 1492) and Sayfi Bokhara’i (d. 1504)¹⁰ and the Qajar man of letters Mohammad Taqi Sepehr

(d. 1880) who based his work, *Barahin al-'Ajam fi qavanin al-mo'jam* (Proofs of 'Ajam in the Rules of Writing) on Shams-e Qays Razi's (fl. 1230) work on rhetoric and poetics, *al-Mo'jam fi me'yar-e ash'ar al-'Ajam* (Book of the Principles of the Poetry of 'Ajam). Even in the case of Browne's literary history, *tazkerehs*, and especially Dowlatshah's work, were important sources of information, as he wrote, "[Dowlatshah] is chiefly responsible, through his interpreter to the West, Von Hammer, for the perspective in which the Persian poets stand in European eyes."¹¹

Thus for historians of Persian literature in the nineteenth and early twentieth century it was chiefly Timurid and pre-Timurid sources that provided "authentic" materials for a theory of the origins and development of Persian poetry, allowing them to completely overlook or evince discomfort with the problematic "middle" period (*motavassetin*). In this way, these works presented competing versions of 'Ajam, whose poets were hopelessly out of fashion in the early modern period. In the tripartite division of the history of literature that is found in many large biographical dictionaries from all periods, the "classical" period (*motaqaddemin*) is valorized as the undisputed legacy of all Persianate cultures, while the "contemporary" (*mota'akhhirin*) is in the process of being defined as the author writes, but it is the middle period of Persianate cultural expansion to its greatest limits that proved to be problematic for authors espousing nascent ideas of nationhood and proposing literary canons. Depending on when an author of a biographical dictionary or poet was active, the "middle" and "modern" periods were relative terms and the poets listed under those sections varied with each writer. In fact, some authors dispensed with the middle period altogether and preferred a binary view of literature: past and present. This attitude is primarily connected to stylistics and aesthetic preferences of latter-day poets:

The early modern Mughal and Safavid eras saw poets and other literati across the transregional Indo-Persian ecumene articulate an unprecedented break with the past through widespread calls for ingenuity and "freshness" (*tāzagī*) in poetic expression. It was not a complete break, though, in that even the most inventive "speakers of the fresh" (*tāza-gūyān*) never completely renounced the literary tradition that they inherited. Rather, they continued to see themselves in a dynamic relationship with their poetic forebears, a relationship in which they, as the "latest" generation (*muta'akhhirin*), took up the classical precedents of 'the ancients' (*motaqaddimin*) and brought them to new and transcendent levels through poetic ingenuity and imaginative effort (*khayāl-bandī*).¹²

To understand this break from the point of view of the history of 'Ajam, it is necessary to first briefly consider the situation in the "middle period."

The notion of an undivided literary 'Ajam or Persianate world, found in the earliest biographical dictionaries such as 'Awfi's *Lobab al-albab* (ca. 1221) and Dowlatshah's *Tazkerat al-Sho'ara*, was upheld to a large extent at the Mughal court in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Works such as Amin Ahmad Razi's *Haft Eqlim* (Seven Climes), written in 1591 at the court of the Mughal Emperor Akbar (r. 1556–1605), were attempts to create a literary cosmos in which Iran was the traditional center of the world but other regions had equal claim to be locales of literary production. The framework of the "seven climes," whose origins go back to Achaemenid times, was being reconfigured by Amin Ahmad Razi to allow the

periphery to be closer to the center, betraying an anxiety on the part of the Mughals about their rightful place in the literary cosmos.¹³ Biographical dictionaries written in Safavid Iran, on the other hand, such as Sam Mirza's *Tohfeh-ye Sami* and Taher Nasrabadi's *Tazkereh*, upheld the social hierarchies and yet displayed a fascination for the vertical spread of poetry among all classes of people and could choose to be more local in their scope, thus unwittingly providing a nationalist framework for their projects. From the Safavid period on, biographical dictionaries produced in Iran did not attempt or never managed to be comprehensive in their scope.

SHIFTING LITERARY VIEWS IN IRAN

A number of historical factors in the eighteenth century continued the process of valorization of the central Iranian lands and rendering the Central and South Asian Persianate world marginal and fragmented. The historical shifts of this time are reflected in the new ordering of the literary world, proposed in the influential *tazkereh* from this period by Azar Begdeli (d. 1781), *Atashkadeh* (Fire Temple), that was dedicated to the enlightened ruler of Iran, Karim Khan Zand (r. 1760–79). Azar's condemnation of major poets such as Sa'eb and Taleb Amoli is often cited as the beginning of the *bazgasht* movement, with a call for a new poetics in order to break free of the hegemonic aesthetic of *sabk-e Hendi* and for a return to classical Iranian models:¹⁴ "For the *bazgasht*, the Indian school represented everything that good poetry was not; it became their 'literary other,' in opposition to which they defined their own literary goals and values."¹⁵ But of course, Azar did not himself use the term *sabk-e Hendi*. In his work he praises the Safavid-Mughal Sa'eb for being the court poet of the Safavid ruler Shah Abbas II (r. 1633–66) and his initial efforts to compose in the classical style: "From the beginning of his writing poetry, the way to the firm imagery of the eloquent poets of the past had been blocked, and the undisputed rules followed by the old masters had been lost"¹⁶ (*toroq-e kheylat-e matineh-ye fosaha-ye motaqaddemin-e masdud va qava'ed-e mosallameh-ye ostadan-e sa'eb-e mafqud*). But Sa'eb's following the new trend is not pleasing (*mabda'-ye tariqeh-ye jadideh-ye napasandideh*).¹⁷ In a similar way, most major poets of the middle period are dismissed on stylistic reasons.

The fact is often overlooked that, aside from stylistic differences, Azar's concern is the preservation of the Persian past in the wake of the fall of the Safavids. His life story is similar to two of his contemporaries, Hazin Lahiji (d. 1756) and Valeh Daghestani (d. 1766), in their struggle and displacement as a result of the Afghan invasion and various civil wars, but while the latter two had managed to escape the turmoil in Esfahan and gain prominence in the expatriate community in India, Azar remained in Iran. All three poets expressed nostalgia for the Safavids in various forms in their poems, and interestingly enough all three authored biographical dictionaries.¹⁸ It would not be too farfetched to claim that Azar felt a certain partiality for those poets of Esfahan who had not abandoned their homeland during a time of political turmoil and thus was more easily able to dismiss on aesthetic grounds the earlier Safavid poets who had traveled to India for a variety of professional and personal reasons. His view of the world and the history of Persian poetry take on a more complex hue when studied in the context of his biography.

In his classification of the poets of the classical period, Azar divides his work into three main geographical sections: Iran, Turan, and Hindustan, probably using

the *Tazkereh-ye Taher-e Nasrabadi* written a century before as his model.¹⁹ Unlike his predecessor, Azar provides brief descriptions of the regions by way of explaining the connections and differences between them. In the section on Turan, Azar introduces the region by narrating the myth, found in the Persian epic, Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, of Fereydun, who divided his kingdom among his three sons, giving Iran to Iraj, Turan to Tur, and the West to Salm. Interestingly, according to an alternate reading from a manuscript of Azar's work, Rum has been changed to Hindustan, suggesting a refashioning of the old myth into the reality of eighteenth-century Persianate sensibilities.²⁰ Azar also declares that Turan has good fruits and at one time it was a major part of Iran, with Khurasan bordering it in the present time. Included among the poets who belonged to this place are most of the earliest ones such as Rudaki, Shahid Balkhi, Abu 'Ali Sina, Rashid Vatvat, 'Onsori, Manuchehri, Amir Mo'ezzi, and even Mowlana Rumi. In contrast, the vast region of Hindustan, given 32 pages in the four published volumes, has almost no connection to Iran since "its customs and ways are mostly in opposition to those of the people of Iran, even Turan" (*rosum va qava'ed-e anja aksar khelaf-e ahl-e Iran ast balkeh Turan*); besides it has strange fruits.²¹ He cursorily writes that what he has collected of its Persian poetry is from some books he has read. The only poet whose poetry is quoted extensively is Amir Khosraw, who belonged to the early period and thus could be claimed as part of the common heritage of all Persianate people.

Individual poems can also be indicators of attitudes toward the literary past and in essence promote a poetic canon. In a *masnavi*, Azar provides a list of the four greatest classical poets, not linking them to poetic forms but with their geographic affiliations:

*jahan-e nazm ra soltan chahar-and / ke har yek bagh-e danesh ra bahar-and
yeki Ferdowsi an-kaz khak-e Tus ast / kazu ru-ye sokhan ru-ye 'arus ast
vaz an pas Anvari k-u sar bar avarad / cho ab-e rawshan az khak-e Abivard
degar Sa'di ke ta dam zad zi Shiraz / rasad shiraziyan ra dar jahan naz
degar sarv-e riyaz-e Qom Nezami / keh shod molk-e sokhan u-ra tamami
ze haq rahmat be-ruh-e pakeshan bad / gol-e firdaws zib-e khakeshan bad.*²²

The world of poetry has four rulers like spring in the garden of knowledge

One is Ferdowsi of Tus because of whom poetry's face is as a bride

Then Anvari who arose like sparkling water from Abivard

Then Sa'di of Shiraz who will always be pride for the Shirazis

Then the cypress of Qum's garden Nizami who was the seal of poetry²³

God be merciful to their souls and the flowers of paradise adorn their graves.

This mini literary canon is reminiscent of, and perhaps a rearticulation, a verse by a poet named 'Azizi cited by the two Timurid men of letters, Dowlatshah (d. 1487) and Jami (d. 1492), and then by Browne, that is actually a paring down of the basic poetic genres/forms in Persian and the best, albeit minimalist, representative of each:

*dar she'r se tan payambaran-and / Harchand ke la nabiyu ba'di
awsaf o qasidah o ghazal ra / Ferdowsi o Anvari o Sa'di*²⁴

The sphere poetic hath its prophets three,

(Although 'There is no Prophet after me')

Firdawsī in the epic, in the ode,

Sa'di, and in *qasida* Anvari.²⁵

Poems of this subgenre—a subgenre particularly favored by Azar—provide us with useful clues regarding the formation of literary canons and the intricate processes of inclusion and exclusion. Azar's mentor Moshtaq proposed his own set of models, also based on different poetic forms: Sa'di in *ghazal*, Anvari in *qasideh*, Firdawsi and Nezami in *bazm*, Ibn Yamin in *qet'eh*, and Khayyam in *roba'i*.²⁶ According to Tavakoli-Targhi, "This authorization of classical poets, later labeled as *Bazgasht-e adabi* (literary return) [by Bahar], was an early expression of literary nationalism in Iran and has had a continuous influence on the modernist historiography of Persian literature."²⁷

Almost a century after Azar the Qajar man of letters Reza Qoli Khan Hedayat (d. 1871) in his encyclopedic *tazkereh*, *Majma' al-Fosaha* (Meeting Place of the Eloquent), called "the best-known *tadhkera* of Persian poets,"²⁸ which was also the first one that was printed and thus had a wider circulation, echoes Azar's sentiments about the *sabk-e Hendi* style but again framed in the debate of the classical, middle period, and modern poets. He says that men of letters of his time preferred the classical style over that of the others: "[They] chose the style of the old poets and wiped away the traces of the ineloquent style of the poets of the later poets from the tablet of the world's mind" (*tariqeh-ye qodama ra bar gozidand . . . [va] noqush-e tariqeh-ye ghayr-e fasiheh-ye motavassetin va mota'bhkherin ra az lowheh-ye khater-e ruzgar foru shostand*).²⁹ Like them, Hedayat dismisses the "middle" and "contemporary" styles in his valorization of the "classical" model of poetry, although he seems to equate the classical revivalists with the old masters.³⁰ In his list of ancient poets, he includes some pre-Mughal Indian canonical poets such as Mas'ud Sa'd Salman, Badr-e Chach, Amir Khosrow, and Hasan Dehlavi, whereas the poet par excellence Hafez falls in the middle group! By Hedayat's time there was almost a complete lack of interest in Persian poetry being produced outside Iran, and his work, despite its voluminous contents, reflects a protonational canon of poets.³¹ Although Hedayat was himself embroiled in a literary dispute with the Qajar man of letters Mirza Fath 'Ali Akhundzadeh (d. 1878) regarding stylistics, ultimately they both agreed on the classical canon. In his *Qertekiya* (1864), Akhundzadeh proposes his own canon of classical Persian poets: Ferdawsi, Nezami, Sa'di, Rumi, and Hafez,³² one that has become firmly entrenched in modern-day views of literature.

However, by the nineteenth century there was a somewhat fixed definition of *'Ajam* and a reconfiguration of the literary geography of Persian that was then transferred to the early literary histories. Iran's pre-Islamic past gained importance as the direct precursor of later New Persian poetry, and the province of Fars was glorified as the heartland of Persian literature, not just in Iran, but surprisingly in India as well. The interest in ancient Iranian religions and texts such as the *Shahnameh*, *Dasatir*, and *Shahnameh*, "resulted in a process of cultural *transference* that intensified the desire for a recovery of the 'forgotten history' of ancient Iran" and eventually "provided a formative element in the discourse of constitutionalism."³³ The role of travelers between Iran and India cannot be overlooked, and an activist like the Indian Parsi Manekji Limji Hataria was instrumental in the "emergence of a new historiographical consciousness."³⁴ His meeting and correspondence with Akhundzadeh in Iran was fruitful in many ways and resulted in the latter producing a work on modernism and Iranian history, *Maktubat-e Kamal al-Dowleh*.³⁵

THE INDIAN CONCEPTION OF 'AJAM

During a period of colonial ascendancy and weakening Mughal rule, Indian Muslims of the nineteenth century developed a romantic notion regarding Iran, in what the modern critic Shamsurrahman Faruqi calls “a case of unprivileged power,”³⁶ both as the home of linguistic purity and authenticity as well as a literary utopia. Strangely enough for a place that was relatively accessible and dominant in the imagination of Persianate Indians, it was not the destination of travels for many South Asians. For Shi'i Muslims and Parsis in India, Iran was the undisputed centre of their sacred geography, although for Persianate individuals trained in the Persian classics, whether Muslim or not, the Persian language was sanctified without any specific reference to the geographic region of Iran. A few Indian Muslim literati such as Mohammad Hasan Qatil (d. 1817), Hajji 'Ali Mirza Maftun,³⁷ and Muhammad Husain Azad (1830–1910),³⁸ visited Iran in the nineteenth century, and some even wrote about their travels. The renowned poet of Persian and Urdu Asadollah Khan Ghaleb (1797–1869) may have invented a Zoroastrian Iranian tutor for himself, a mysterious person called 'Abd Al-Samad, no doubt to bolster his claims to proficiency in the spoken and “purer” language with non-Arabic archaic Persian words. In a letter dated August 27, 1862, to a friend, Ghaleb writes, “Between me and the Persian masters there are two differences: first, that their birthplace was Iran and mine India; and second, that they were born a hundred, two, four, eight hundred, years before me.”³⁹ Thus both geographical and temporal distances came to matter tremendously and despite his self-confidence in Persian Ghaleb accepted his position in the literary hierarchy of the time.

An important work in this regard that appeared in the nineteenth century in India was the *Sokhandan-e Fars*, initially a series of lectures in Urdu that the poet and educator Muhammad Husain Azad delivered between 1872 and 1874 in Lahore, later edited in 1887 by the author but not published in book form until 1907. Perhaps under the spell of the *dasatiri* discourse that had captured the attention of many intellectuals in India and Iran, Azad begins with the pre-Islamic history of Iran where he posits Fars as the cradle of Iranian civilization. It has also been suggested that Azad's source for the history of Iran was Sir John Malcolm's *The History of Persia* (1815).⁴⁰ The 11 lectures in Urdu bear the following titles and display the range of his philological interest:

1. The history of ancient Fars
2. Ancient languages of Iran
3. Transformation of the Persian language after Islam
4. The second revolution in the language of Fars
5. Legal principles and customs of the people of Fars
6. Manners and customs of the people of Iran after Islam
7. How a country's climate affects its literature⁴¹
8. The Persian language and its relationship to other languages
9. The influence of Arabic on Persian
10. Persian in India
11. The history of Persian poetry⁴²

Azad also brought his knowledge of Indic philology into his analysis, thus adding a comparative dimension to the project. Unfortunately, this work has largely been ignored by scholars, not just in India but also in Europe, and its Persian translation by the Afghan poet laureate 'Abdullah Khan Qari (1871–1943), published in Kabul in 1936, did not have a significant impact among scholars in the Persophone world. Azad's similar work on Urdu philology and history of literature, *Ab-e Hayat* (Water of Life), has not shared the same fate, in yet another triumph of literary history tied to nationalist interests.

For Azad language is the primary index of a nation's civilization and culture and he makes this the focus of his lectures. In his first lecture he expresses regret over the fragmentation of the Persianate world, stating that in earlier times when Iranians (*ahl-e Iran*) were in India in great numbers, Indians were able to obtain firsthand knowledge of that land's culture and language, which was not true any longer.⁴³ Thus his purpose in delivering these lectures was to retrieve some of the lost knowledge about the Persian past and rewrite the past in the image of the present. In keeping with this idea, in his last chapter he classifies the history of literature into four groups: (1) Rudaki, Asadi Tusi, Ferdowsi, and so on; (2) Khaqani, Anvari, and Nezami; (3) Sa'di and Hafez; (4) Jalal Asir, Qasem Mashhadi, and Qasem Divaneh; and so forth.⁴⁴ This chronological grouping seems to offer an alternate to the traditional tripartite classification favored by biographical dictionaries and is also a precursor to twentieth-century views. In his final group Azad includes Safavid Iranian poets who had been active at Indian courts, but mentions Persian poets of Indian origin such as Ghani Kashmiri, Bidel Dehlavi, and Naser 'Ali only in passing. Much milder in his tone than his Iranian predecessors, he asserts that these poets basically confused reality (*asliyat*) and imagination (*kehayal*) and over-used metaphors and abstract ideas. If Iranians introduced this deficiency, then its reform (*eslah*) also originated from that place, for according to Azad, after AH 1200 (i.e., 1785 CE) Iranian poets began to once again write *ghazals* in the style of Sa'di and Hafez and *qasidehs* in the style of the great poets Khaqani and Anvari.⁴⁵

In 1885 Azad finally fulfilled a lifelong dream to visit his ancestral homeland Iran.⁴⁶ Upon his return the next year in Lahore he delivered a public lecture in Urdu about his trip that was subsequently published along with his notes, but he was never able to compose a proper travelogue as he had planned.⁴⁷ Despite his excitement at being in the heart of the Persianate world, Azad was extremely disappointed by the rundown condition of Shiraz, the homeland of the poets Sa'di and Hafez, at this time;⁴⁸ he also visited other historical and literary centers such as Esfahan and Tehran in Iran and Harat in Afghanistan. His ultimate purpose during this trip was to buy books and conduct research for a dictionary project that never came to fruition. In the capital, he met a number of scholars, among them Mo'tamed al-Dowleh Navab Farhad Mirza, Mahdi Qoli Khan Hedayat Mokhber al-Dowleh son of Reza Qoli Khan Hedayat, Mirza Reza Khan Afshar Bakeshoghlu, and Mirza Mohammad Hosayn Forughi.⁴⁹ Azad obtained a number of books from them for his library and discussed subjects close to his heart such as Persian philology and the purely Iranian roots of the language. In his later and more well-known work on the origins of Urdu literature, the *Ab-e Hayat*, published in 1880, Azad would repeat some of his ideas on the Persian language, this time vis-à-vis its influence on Urdu.⁵⁰

As mentioned earlier, Azad's role in the debate regarding the importance of texts from Iran's antiquity and the privileging of Fars as the primary location of Persian culture has not been taken into account by later scholars. Twenty years after Azad delivered his lectures, in Iran Mohammad Naser Forsat al-Dowleh Shirazi published his *Asar-e 'Ajam* in 1894, which was an "inventive blend of myth and history to strengthen the elusive ties between antiquity and modernity."⁵¹ In this work, in a nineteenth-century trend that gained momentum, Fars is celebrated as the cradle of Iranian culture and literature, and the poetry of the province is exclusively cited. This is merely one episode in the larger narrative of Iranian-Indian interaction in the nineteenth century, a subject that has yet to receive its due attention.

The last encyclopedic work on Persian literature that was published in the early twentieth century with the word '*Ajam*' in the title brings us back to E. G. Browne and his literary history. This is the five-part *She'r al-'Ajam* (Poetry of '*Ajam*'), the influential literary history of Persian written in Urdu by the Indian scholar Shibli Nu'mani (d. 1914), published in 1908, 1909, 1910, 1912, and 1918 by the Dar al-Mosannefin in Azamgarh (India), with its Persian translation appearing in Tehran between 1927 and 1948. It is ironic that, although the scholars did not meet and Shibli did not know English, each was aware of the other's grand projects, as is clear from the references to each other in their works. Shibli knew of the publication of Browne's first volume, while Browne refers to Shibli's work in his study on the Safavid period: "The attention of those who read Urdu should be called to a very excellent modern book entitled *She'r al-'Ajam* [Poetry of the Persians] by the late Shibli Numani, lithographed at 'Aligarh in two volumes in or about [AH] 1325/1907, and containing critical studies of about a score of the classical poets of Persia from Firdawsi to Hafiz."⁵²

Shibli's work is a remarkable achievement in the history of Persian scholarship. His work defined '*Ajam*' as a Persophone Islamic state whose literary history stopped at the eve of the fragmentation of the Persianate world. For him the tripartite division of literary ages is thus: Hanzaleh to Nezami (*godama*), Kamal Esma'il to Jami (*motavassetin*), and Fighani to Kalim (*mota'khkherin*). After this, poetry devolved into mere *chistan-gu'i* (riddling).⁵³ Thus it should be no surprise to us now that Shibli "barely mentions [post-Mughal poets such as] Ghalib or Bedil, ignores scores of other Indians" and "hardly any who were not discussed in *She'r al-'Ajam* made the canon in universities."⁵⁴ In no way is Shibli antagonistic to what we would call the *sabk-e Hendi* poets; he prefers the Iranian born residents of Mughal India in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries such as 'Orfi, Naziri, Taleb, Kalim, Qodsi, and Ghazali, although ironically he asserts that it is the Indian environment that brings a special quality to everything Persian.⁵⁵ Like Azad earlier, Shibli also considers that climate has a great effect on a literary culture.⁵⁶

Shibli lists all the biographical dictionaries he has consulted, the last being the *Majmu'eh-e fosaha* [*Majma' al-fosaha*]. His criticism on biographical dictionaries as sources for the writing of literary history is centered on the fact that these works are more anthologies and less biographical in their content, thus not allowing one to trace the development of poetry.⁵⁷ Bemoaning the fact that Europeans have paid more attention to Persian literature than Muslims have, he mentions the great scholarship of James Darmesteter, V. A. Zhukovski, Theodor Nöldeke, Sir Gore Ouseley, and E. G. Browne who has written the most comprehensive work on the subject.⁵⁸ Given the attitudes among Persophone Indians at the turn of the

twentieth century, it would seem that Shibli's bias against Indian-born poets was not entirely inherited from the Iranian biographers such as Azar and Hedayat or from Orientalists like Browne. His views were also shaped by his own reading of the poetry with a complex set of aesthetic criteria that he attempts to articulate in his work.⁵⁹

In the case of Afghanistan, a nation that shared the same Persian literary past, unlike the Indian poets who did not seem to have taken much notice of the *bazgasht* poets, there was a conscious attempt to reject this movement. In doing this the Afghan man of letters responsible for giving a direction to modern Dari literature, Mahmud Tarzi (1866–1935), “was more than censuring Qa'ani's traditional poetics; he was claiming an independent identity for Persian literature produced in Afghanistan,” a land that, according to Wali Ahmadi, “abounds with, and should be sufficiently proud of, its own ‘national’ luminaries.”⁶⁰

CONCLUSION

Following the works of Browne and Shibli, the first “step” in the writing a literary history of Persian literature in Iran was taken by Mohammad Hosayn Khan Zoka' al-Molk in 1917.⁶¹ This work, *Tarikh-e Adabiyat-e Farsi*, was the latest piece in the puzzle of the larger debate on Persian language and literature that took place in Iran in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I have focused on the moment when Iranian, Indian, and European Orientalist discourses on Persian literature converged in the writing of a comprehensive literary history without making a complete break with the *tazkereh* tradition. It would seem that after a few centuries of an expanding Persianate literary culture that went beyond the boundaries of the Iranian lands, in the end the claim over the literary co-ownership of *'Ajam* was voluntarily ceded by the Indians to the Iranians, and the idea of a larger literary domain was in some ways a literary utopia. For literary historians in the nineteenth century, it was the “classical” period of poetry, Timurid and earlier, that was the undisputed locus of the canon of great poets that finally prevailed in modern literary history. In the exclusive attention paid to literary *sabks*, and especially to the Ghaznavid period with the closest connection to the pre-Islamic past, there has been an insufficient focus of the role of the Timurids and their impressive literary endeavor to document the early history of the literary culture and collect texts in an attempt to preserve them for posterity, and much more on the problematic *sabk-e Hendi* “school.” The traditional art of *tazkereh* writing flowered in the fifteenth century survived until the nineteenth century, and it was not an activity that was being carried out in isolation by old-fashioned scholars who were uninfluenced by new ways of writing literary history. Literary histories being produced by European Orientalists, as well as by Indian scholars during the same period were in a dialogic relationship with the major biographical dictionaries. No writer of a literary history represented a monolithic view of the Persian literary past, but rather they differed in their views on how to present the past, depending on the biographical dictionaries their authors had access to in private and public collections in Europe and depending on individual taste. To study these intersections of scholarly efforts to write the literary history of Persian would be a worthwhile task. I have attempted to offer a brief outline of the Persianate literary histories of the early modern period from the Iranian and Indian points of view; however the Central Asian point of view is still

missing. Over a millennium ago Ferdowsi wrote his famous line: *basi ranj bordam dar in sal-e si / 'ajam zendeh kardam be-din Parsi* (I suffered a lot for thirty years to revivify 'Ajam with this Persian). Perhaps he would have been surprised if he could have foreseen that the term 'Ajam would have a long history of shifting meanings and geographical designations ultimately defined by national boundaries.

NOTES

1. In his insightful essay on the history of Persian histories in literature and their relationship to *tazkerehs* see Heshmat Moayyad, "Tarikh-e adabiyat-e Farsi: moruri bar savabeq va nazari darbarezeh-ye ayandeh-ye in fann," *Iranshenasi* 3, no. 1 (1370): 71–84. The author considers Italo Pizzi's *Storia della Poesia Persiana* (1894) to be the first comprehensive history of Persian literature in the modern sense (75).
2. The four volumes of *A Literary History of Persia* were published by Cambridge University Press in 1902, 1906, 1920, and 1924 and have been reprinted numerous times.
3. *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. 1. Later in his work, Browne considers his own position as an outsider in the culture: "I have included such poets as enjoy any considerable fame in their own country, and any others whom I happen to have come across in the course of my reading . . . It is doubtful how far a foreigner is competent to criticize . . . The taste of even the Turks and Indians, who are more familiar with Persian poetry than we can easily become, differs very considerably from that of the Persians themselves, who must be reckoned the most competent judges of their own literature," 4:226. G. Michael Wickens comments on Browne's enterprise: "It also abounds in examples of Browne's and his society's prejudices, as well as reflecting some unfortunate Iranian cultural attitudes of the time (volume 4, for example, though packed with valuable material, does scant justice to the literature, art, and general high culture of the whole period 1500–1900)," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 4:484.
4. Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Historiography* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 104.
5. Bahar's monumental work, *Sabkshenasi*, was published in 1942, although he had aired some of his ideas on the stylistic schools earlier. This work is still used as a textbook in university courses in Iran. Bahar's schema is discussed and deconstructed in chap. 2 of Matthew Smith's dissertation, "Literary Courage: Language, Land, and the Nation in the Works of Malik al-Shu'ara Bahar" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2006).
6. Muzaffar Alam, "The Culture and Politics of Persian in Precolonial Hindustan," in *Literary Cultures in History: Reconstructions from South Asia*, ed. Sheldon Pollock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 154–55.
7. According to C. E. Bosworth, "'Ajam was a pejorative term, used by Arabs conscious of their political and social superiority in early Islam. But by the third century AH / ninth century CE, the non-Arabs, and above all the Persians, were asserting their social and cultural equality (*taswia*) with the Arabs, if not their superiority (*tazfil*) over them (a process seen in the literary movement of the Šo'ubiya). In any case, there was always in some minds a current of admiration for the 'Ajam as heirs of an ancient, cultured tradition of life . . . After these controversies had died down, and the Persians had achieved a position of power in the Islamic world comparable to their numbers and capabilities, "'Ajam" became a simple ethnic and geographical designation," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 1:700. At some point during the intervening centuries 'Ajam came to be equated with the expanding world of Persianate culture.
8. See J. de Bruijn, "Hammer-Purgstall, Joseph Freiherr von," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 11:644–46. The importance of Dowlatshah's work cannot be exaggerated; according to Paul E. Losensky, "in its encyclopedic scope, it is the touchstone and immediate

- forerunner of all later general *tazkirahs* . . . [and] exemplifies the comprehensiveness of the Timurid-Turkmen consolidation of the literary tradition," *Welcoming Fighānī: Imitation and Poetic Individuality in the Safavid-Mughal Ghazal* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1998), 147.
9. Peter Avery and EIr, "Ouseley, Gore, Sir," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online ed. Persian learning among the Orientalists in colonial India from the time of Sir William Jones (1746–94) and later is a related topic: see Tariq Rahman, *Language, Ideology, and Power: Language Learning among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002).
 10. *The Prosody of the Persians according to Saifi, Jami, and Other Writers* (Calcutta: C. B. Lewis, 1872; reprint, Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1970). Both sources chosen by Blochmann were, of course, due to their common use in nineteenth-century India, as he indicates in his introduction, p. iii. Therefore, the Orientalist privileging of the Timurid period was to some extent a duplication of local practice.
 11. *A Literary History of Persia*, 3:436.
 12. Rajeev Kinra, "Fresh Words for a Fresh World: *Tāza-Gū'ī* and the Poetics of Newness in Early Modern Indo-Persian Poetry," *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory* 3, no. 2 (2007): 126.
 13. For further discussion of this work, see Sunil Sharma, "Amīr Khusraw, Fayzī and the Geography of Indo-Persian Literature" (unpublished paper).
 14. I do not want to revisit here the whole problem of deconstructing the four *sabks* and the way *sabk-e Hendi* has been marginalized and reintegrated into the scholarly discourse of Persian literature. Two works that deal with this problem are by Paul Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*, and Matthew C. Smith, "Literary Connections: Bahar's *Sabkshenasi* and the Bazgasht-e Adabi," *Journal of Persianate Studies* 2, no. 2 (2009): 194–209. For a discussion of Azar, see Ehsan Yarshater, "The Indian or Safavid Style: Progress or Decline?" *Persian Literature* (Albany, NY: Bibliotheca Persica, 1988), 253–55. Although questions of style were very much in play in the works discussed in the present chapter, they deserve a separate study.
 15. Losensky, *Welcoming Fighānī*, 50.
 16. Yarshater, "The Indian or Safavid Style," 254.
 17. *Atashkadeh*, vols. 1–3, ed. Hasan Sadat Naseri; vol. 4, ed. Mir Hashem Mohaddes (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1336–78/1957–99), vol. 1, 122–23.
 18. Mana Kia's dissertation deals with this and other biographical texts in detail from a more historical point of view than I have taken: Mana Kia, "Contours of Persianate Community, 1722–1835" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2009).
 19. Begun in 1672–73, this work was dedicated to the Safavid Shah Solaiman (r. 1666–94): C. A. Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-bibliographical Survey* (London: Luzac, 1972), vol. 1, part 2, 818–21. Taher's own poetry was in the *sabk-e Hendi* style, and thus he did not dismiss poets writing in that style.
 20. *Atashkadeh*, 4:239. Footnote 2 gives the alternate reading that is from the facsimile edition edited by Ja'far Shahidi (Tehran, 1337/1958).
 21. *Atashkadeh*, 4:17.
 22. *Ibid.*, 4:12–13. These lines are not found in Azar's *divan*.
 23. Nezami's affiliation with Qom rather than Ganjeh is supported by an alternate tradition, perhaps due to a family connection.
 24. *Baharestan*, ed. Esmā'el Hakemi (Tehran: Ettela'at, 1374/1995), 105; *Tazkerat al-sho'ara*, ed. Mohammad Ramazani (Tehran: Padideh Khavar, 1366/1987), 41.
 25. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 2:116.
 26. Mohammad Mozaffar Hosayn Saba, *Tazkereh-ye Ruz-e Rawshan*, ed. Mohammad Hosayn Rokhzadeh Adamiyat (Tehran: Eslamiyeh, 1343/1964), 738.
 27. Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 105.

28. Yarshater, "The Indian or Safavid Style," 255.
29. Reza Qoli Khan Hedayat, *Majma' al-fosaha*, ed. Mazaher Mosaffa (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1336–40/1957–61), 1:x.
30. It is noteworthy that Hedayat combines both the *tabaqat* and tripartite temporal forms of classification in his work. His sections are: (1) 115 kings and princes, (2) 322 ancient poets, (3) 66 middle poets, and (4) 358 modern and contemporary poets. Storey, *Persian Literature*, vol. 1, part 2, 911–12.
31. Hedayat's work was also utilized by Browne to a great extent and may have shaped his view of the Persian literary past. An exception is his opinion of the Safavid-Mughal poet Sa'eb: "I must confess with shame that in this case my taste agrees with the foreigners, and that I find Sa'ib especially attractive, both on account of his simplicity of style and his skill in the figures entitled *husn-i-ta'lil* or 'poetical aetiology,' and *irsalu'l-mathal* or 'proverbial commission,'" *A Literary History of Persia*, 4:164.
32. Iraj Parsinejad writes: "He had not read many of the well-known texts of classical Persian poetry . . . merely because, in his judgment, they were written contrary to nature and custom. It is apparent that Akhundzade was led to such erroneous appraisals of medieval Persian poetry by his misapplication of the modern realist criteria prevalent in the nineteenth century." Iraj Parsinejad, *A History of Literary Criticism in Iran, 1866–1951* (Bethesda, MD: Ibex, 2003), 64.
33. Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran*, 97.
34. *Ibid.*, 94.
35. For further information on this interaction, see Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870–1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 61, 63, 66.
36. See Shamsurrahman Faruqi, "Unprivileged Power: The Strange Case of Persian (and Urdu) in Nineteenth-Century India," *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 13 (1998): 3–30.
37. Maftun produced a travelogue of his 1826–28 trip to Iran and the Shi'i holy sites; the text was put together in 1833 from his notes and has been partially published. 'Ali Mirza Maftun, *Zobdat al-akhbar fi savaneh al-asfar*, ed. Zakirah Sharif Qasimi (New Delhi: Markaz-e Motala'at-e Farsi va Asiya, 2003). Mana Kia's dissertation analyzes this work in detail.
38. For Azad's travelogue, see note 47.
39. *Ghalib: Life and Letters*, translated and edited by Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994), 279.
40. Muhammad Sadiq, *A History of Urdu Literature*, 2nd ed. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), 381. The complete title of Malcolm's work is: *The History of Persia, from the most early period to the present time; containing an account of the religion, government, usages, and character of the inhabitants of that kingdom* (London: J. Murray, 1815).
41. On a comparative note, see the Qajar scholar Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani's work, *A'ineh-ye Sekandari*, which sets up a cosmology of the Aryan nation of Iran, deploying older forms of classification that partly go back to those found in earlier biographical dictionaries. According to him, "The Persian language, like the Iranian land, owed its existence to the natural surroundings that gave it meaning." Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804–1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 45.
42. *Sokbandan-e Fars* (Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy, 1979). The first part of the book includes a long essay on Persian philology, while the second part comprises his 11 lectures.
43. *Ibid.*, 4.
44. This cluster of poets also makes an appearance in his work on Urdu literature, *Ab-e Hayat*, see Frances Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness: Urdu Critics and Its Critics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 162.

45. *Sokhandan-e Fars*, 315.
46. Muhammad Sadiq notes an anomaly in Azad's writings. In the *Sokhandan-e Fars* Azad claims to make remarks about Iran based on personal observation. However, at this time he had not visited the country. Perhaps these views were based on his experiences in Central Asia as a spy of the British government, *A History of Urdu Literature*, 380–81.
47. *Sayr-e Iran* (Lahore, n.d.). I would like to thank Daniel Majchrowicz for providing me with a copy of this rare work.
48. *Ibid.*, 13–34.
49. *Ibid.*, 31–35.
50. Pritchett, *Nets of Awareness*, 140–41. An English translation of this work was made by Pritchett and Faruqi, *Ab-e hayât: Shaping the Canon of Urdu Poetry* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001).
51. Kashani-Sabet adds, "Fursat's explanations of terminology differed somewhat from Hamd Allah Mustawfi's, but the creative process of narration allowed for the conflation of myth and history, giving rise to new forms of cultural analysis," Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*, 44.
52. *A Literary History of Persian*, 3:107–8. This statement shows that Browne was aware that among the readers of his work there would be South Asians proficient in both Persian and Urdu. I am grateful to Farzin Vejdani for his discussion of Browne's knowledge of Urdu.
53. *She'r al-'Ajam*, 1:3.
54. Faruqi, "Unprivileged Power," 26.
55. *She'r al-'Ajam*, 4:175–76. According to Ehsan Yarshater, "By reading Shebli, one gets the distinct impression that the decline in Persian poetry began not in the fifteenth century or even earlier, as most modern critics would have it, but in the eighteenth century, after the demise of the great poets of the Safavid and Moghul era. To him, only the contrived poetry of Nâser 'Ali, Bidel, and their like constitutes a decline." Yarshater, "The Indian or Safavid Style," 257.
56. *She'r al-'Ajam*, 4:177–85.
57. *Ibid.*, 1:2.
58. *Ibid.*, 1:6–7.
59. According to Faruqi, "Shibli's reputation however, is more that of an arbiter of good taste in Persian, rather than that of a Persian poet." Faruqi, "Unprivileged Power," 30.
60. *Modern Persian Literature in Afghanistan: Anomalous Visions of History and Form* (London: Routledge, 2008), 40. According to the author, the effort to link modernity and literature "gave rise to a unique, modern discursive formation whereby literature and history . . . became intrinsically and unavoidably interlinked, to the extent that they appeared as one and the same entity,"
61. Heshmat Moayyad, "Tarikh-e adabiyat-e Farsi," 75n13, 83. I have not been able to trace a copy of this work.
62. A further examination into the Afghan canon of classical Persian literature would make for an interesting comparative project.

CHAPTER 3

IRANIAN HISTORY IN TRANSITION

RECASTING THE SYMBOLIC IDENTITY OF BABAK KHORRAMDIN

TOURAJ ATABAKI

IN A WORLD FOUNDED ON NATION-STATE ENTITIES, the construction of collective identity is a politically motivated project promoted by certain schools of historiography aiming at filling the gaps between people's real or imagined past and their present political actuality. In fashioning twentieth-century Iranian identity, historians have made an effort to revisit the distant past and, hence, craft a new definition of the past that is entangled in the meshes of new political ideologies. In this regard, writing ethno-nationalist and Islamic histories in modern Iran has been articulated consciously by the recovery of self, rejecting the other, and the discovery of its elite agents who according to such narratives have exclusively been in charge of the protection of the motherland or the Islamic land against alien others. The alien others often comprised the Arabs, the Turks, the Mongols, and in modern history, the colonial powers, namely, the Russians and the British or most recently the United States of America. Furthermore, in Islamic historiography, an attempt has been made to highlight the Islamic, and specifically the Shi'i, characteristics of Iran rather than its ethnic or cultural particularities—particularities that are summarily dismissed as a global imperialist conspiracy by nationalist, secularist, or Marxist ideologies.

Consequently, for historians engaged in the rewriting ethno-nationalist or religious histories, the refashioning of certain cultural elites becomes an essential component of their effort to mobilize people for affiliating to a new national, territorial, ethnic, or religious identity. Ironically, in the conceptualization of such an endeavor, Islamic historiography in Iran has opted to Islamicize or rather Shi'i-ize the past by reintroducing the same elite agents employed by the ethno-nationalist historiography, yet with a different agenda.

In such customized ethno-nationalist, or Islamist, projects, it is not astonishing that documentation of a particular historical memory often corresponds with amnesia. However, historical amnesia in Iranian twentieth-century historiography is by no means limited to nationalist or Islamist historians. Iranian Stalinist historiography has also often attempted to reconstruct the nation's history by adapting historicism and carefully amalgamating class analysis with social theory that often leads to dismissing parts of historical episodes or periods. Although both nationalist and Islamist historiography reject Stalinist historiography vehemently for distorting the past, their own methodologies seem to be as essentialist as the Stalinist one. In this regard, Babak Khorramdin's revolt in the early ninth century is a vivid example of how a single episode in the distant past can be used as an instrument for generating and assessing factual and counterfactual scenarios to address the shifting identity of Iranians in the twentieth century.

Almost two hundred years after the introduction of Islam to Iran, Babak, a neo-Mazdakite leader, emerged from the northwestern province of Azerbaijan and revolted against the Abbasid caliphate. Babak's life and his twenty-year-long revolt has been the subject of scholarly studies as well as controversial interpretations in twentieth-century Iranian historiography.

This chapter analyzes the differing viewpoints on Babak's revolt in the country's past and national curriculum, including scholarly conducted research and idiosyncratic narratives representing nationalist, Stalinist, regionalist, traditional Islamist, and Shi'i historiographies. Also, this study explores how the shifting political culture of Iran has led to the construction of the nation's real or imagined past, with the aim of forming new self-protective identity structures for Iranians.

THE REVOLT OF BABAK

The Arab Muslim conquest of the northwest of Iran began in the seventh century when the Arab army gained victories on the western frontier of Persia during the caliphate of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab. They then marched toward the north conquering Azerbaijan from 639 to 643 CE. However, governing Azerbaijan soon proved to be an intricate task by itself. In *Futuh al-Buldan*, there are references to a number of uprisings during which the people of Azerbaijan defied the Muslims rule in the region. In the course of one of these uprisings, which ended with a peace treaty between the Arab commander representing the caliph and the satrap of Azerbaijan, the Arab army gave assurances to refrain from demolishing the fire temples in the province, acknowledging the right of Azerbaijanis to practice their religious and communal ceremonies and festivals.¹

Following the Arab conquest, Arab commanders were appointed to rule different parts of Azerbaijan. It was only after the revolt of Babak Khorramdin (or Khorrami), against the Abbasid caliphate from 816 to 817 CE, that the caliphate's influence gradually diminished in Azerbaijan. For the next two centuries until the arrival of the Seljuk Turks in the eleventh century, Azerbaijan either enjoyed semi-autonomous status under the caliphate of Baghdad or was ruled by local dynasties.

Babak's somewhat sensational and legendary campaign have been discussed extensively in some well-known classics such as Ibn al-Nadim's *al-Fihrist*, al-Muqaddasi's *Ahsan al-Ta'asim fi Ma'rifat al-Aqalim*, Nezam al-Mulk's *Siyasatnameh*, 'Abd al-Qahir Baghdadi's *al-Farq bayn al-Firq*, Mas'udi's *al-Tanbih va al-Ishraf* and

Murraṣaj al-Zahab, Ya'qubi's *Tarikh Ya'qubi* and Abu Hanifeh Dinvari's *Akhbar al-Taval*, a work by a contemporary of Babak. One of the most detailed accounts of Babak's revolt may be found in *Akhbar Babak* by Waqid Ibn-'Amr Tamimi, which is quoted by Ibn al-Nadim's *al-Fihrist*.² Remarkably, with only one exception, all these narratives reveal some degree of bias when narrating Babak's revolt.³

Babak launched his revolt during the reign of al-Ma'mun in 816/817 CE. As a devotee of Khorramdin (Khorramiyeh),⁴ Babak enjoyed the support of the Khorramdin community in Azerbaijan as well as the volunteers from Isfahan or Kashan. From his formidably inaccessible Fort of Bazz (*Qalleh Bazz*), situated in the mountainous area of today's district of Kalibar at a distance of about 150 kilometers north east of Tabriz, Babak led his campaign against the Abbasid caliphates of al-Ma'mun and later al-Mu'tasim. Babak secured his authority by inflicting decisive and humiliating defeats upon al-Ma'mun. The twenty-year duration of Babak's revolt could be interpreted as a sign of the support his campaign enjoyed among the people of Azerbaijan highlands, especially the peasants whose fertile land was often seized by the Baghdad's official appointees and the Muslim newcomers.

Babak's revolt further spread in waves from an area stretching upper Azerbaijan, from the Mughan steppe, into north of Aras River, Beylaqan, and Nakhjivan. His supporters held sway over eastward to Talesh and the Caspian Sea, westward to Marand and the district of Julfa, southward to southward to Ardabil and the district of the Lake Urmia.

For al-Mu'tasim, who succeeded al-Ma'mun following the latter's death in 833, the Khorramdin revolt was a matter of grave concern. Later in the same year, when the news of the move of a large number of Khorramdins from Jibal and Isfahan to the north and the building of a new garrison near Hamadan reached Baghdad, the new caliph decided to enforce his military presence in the region by dispatching new regiments. Although Babak's army profoundly suffered at the early stages of al-Mu'tasim's military campaign, he still exerted authority over the region. In his second massive assault against Babak, al-Mu'tasim appointed a senior general, Haydar Ibn-Kavus Afshin, son of the vassal prince of Ustrushana to launch a new massive military campaign to end Babak's revolt.

Afshin's sustained assaults against Babak were often accompanied by calls for surrender to the caliphate with the promise of delivering his mercy. Knowing his fate as an apostle of Khorramdin and despite sustaining heavy losses, Babak refused to surrender. In his final months of resistance, Babak turned to the Byzantine Emperor Theophius for support, which was denied.

In the final stage of his military campaign, having enjoyed the ultimate logistic support of the caliphate, Afshin launched his decisive attack on Babak and his followers in the summer of 837, conquering and, later on, demolishing Babak's rock-solid Fort of Bazz. However, Babak, together with a number of his family members and warriors, slipped away and headed for Armenia, where he was detained and handed over to Afshin by a local ruler.

The outlines of Babak's final days have been narrated in great detail by a variety of authors, including those mentioned earlier. Upon Babak's arrival in Samarra, al-Mu'tasim staged a ceremonial execution to set an example for his opponents. Al-Mu'tasim's brutality against Babak and his followers and his lavish grace toward Afshin and his junior commanders underline the significance of Babak's defeat. Nevertheless, the Khorramdin movement survived long after

Babak's elimination. In fact, the remnants of it can be traced as late as the thirteenth century.

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF BABAK'S REVOLT AND IRANIAN TRANSITIONAL IDENTITIES

Since the formation, recognition and consolidation of the modern territorial boundaries of Iran in the mid-nineteenth century, historiographers have focused on the analysis of Iranians' endeavors to uphold their ethnic and cultural identities in the face of Islam. Arguably, the historiography of Babak's revolt opens up a challenging line of enquiry into Iranians' reactions to the inception of Islam to their plateau. Evidently, the question of accommodation of Islam and resistance to its dissemination has evolved into a more political enquiry since the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1982.

Narrative is at the heart of probably every historical event of which we are aware. In a sense, history is mostly a substantial collection of narratives, and it is on these that its power largely rests. The same is true of the history of Babak's revolt. The narrative and interpretation of his belief system, life, and death are all intrinsic to the understanding of his revolt. However, different narratives of his revolt have generated different readings.

A brief examination of the existing narratives of Babak's revolt, which appeared immediately before and throughout the twentieth century, reveals that, in addition to an absence of adequate or substantiated exposition of evidence, the validity of arguments and counterarguments offered in these narratives is often based on either political or ideological agendas. In the following pages we revisit these narratives in six acts.

ACT ONE: BABAK AS THE SON OF PERSIA AGAINST THE ARAB MUSLIM OTHER

Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani's brief account of Babak's revolt in the late nineteenth century seems to be among the very few narratives that offer a new framework for an intellectual debate. While he emphasized the forceful dissemination of Islam to Iran, he recognized the fact that conversion to Islam was forcefully demanded inside Iran due to the oppression exercised by the Sasanian Moghan (Zoroastrian religious authorities). He described Iranians as having a natural propensity for adopting alternative religious traditions as well as developing various doctrines, philosophies and belief systems derived from their own religious traditions such as the Mazdaki and Manichaean practices. He further considers Babak's revolt as a conscious effort to pursue this tradition.⁵

Between 1933 and 1934, Sa'id Nafisi, a nationalist historian, published a series of articles in the journal *Mehr* in which he presented a romantic picture of Babak as an ultranationalist who was combined admiration for Iranian pre-Islamic beliefs with profound anti-Arab sentiments. Some twenty years later, Sa'id Nafisi's articles were developed into a book titled *Babak Khorramdin Delavar-e Azarbayjan* (Babak Khorramdin, the Hero of Azerbaijan).⁶

In his introduction, Sa'id Nafisi states that the greatest movements in Iran's long "turbulent history" occurred in the second and the third centuries following "the Arab incursion."⁷ According to Nafisi, the outcome of this incursion was

the imposition of total submission and capitulation upon Iranians by a handful of ignoble camel riders and desert dwellers (*biyabangard*).⁸ He further argues “in the history of no region other than Iran can one find for almost three thousand years before and three thousand years after its formation, an uninterrupted endeavor to rescue itself from the sustained assault (*dastbord*) by the Semitic people.”⁹ Said Nafisi then refers to a number of individuals who, according to him, were the outstanding representatives of the Iranian national renaissance movements and the guardians of her distinct identity: “These great Iranian men have no intention but to liberate themselves from the oppressive shackles of the foreigners. All of the successive uprisings, which we have particularly witnessed in our ancestors’ history against the Arab encroachment, have only taken place to save Iran from that excruciating captivity.”¹⁰

According to Nafisi, “what [distinguished] Babak amongst all of these great men was his bravery and prominence standing fast against the enemy [i.e., the caliphate].”¹¹ He then referred to the purpose of his study: “This book is meant to bring together what we have so far been handed down so that it will be of benefit to Iranians when need is felt in the future and if, God forbidden, one day Iran were to face such calamities, this [book] could serve as an example and guide to bring forth yet another savior such as Babak.”¹²

On Babak’s origin and his ruling territory, Nafisi’s account is mainly based on Tabari and Ibn-Nadim’s accounts. Nafisi avers that Babak was a Mazdakite whose descendants originated in Ctesiphon, the capital of the Sasanian Persia, and settled in Azerbaijan.¹³ According to him, Babak’s sphere of influence lay southward across Ardabil and today’s Marand, reaching eastwards the Caspian Sea cutting into the Shamakhi and Shirvan regions, stretching into the Moghan Steppe to the north along the south bank of the Aras (Araxes) River and extending toward Julfa and Nakhjivan.¹⁴ Nafisi also points out that the people who lived in the south of the territory controlled by Babak were Persian and those who lived in the north of this region were Alans or Alanis, who were an offspring of the Aryan ethnic group.¹⁵

Prior to the Revolution of 1978–1982, narratives such as Nafisi’s were reflected in official history textbooks. In the history book of the sixth grade published in 1967, the uprising of the Babak was glorified and portrayed as a movement aimed at “re-establishing the country’s independence and restoring the Iranian kingdom of the Sassanids.”¹⁶ Parviz Natel Khanlari, the author of the schoolbook and one of the leading scholars of the period, asserts that Afshin, being of Iranian origin, could never stand against Babak:

Babak and Afshin reached a secret understanding to overthrow the Abbasids [750–1258] and re-establish a monarchic system similar to that of Sassanid Empire [226–651] . . . [However,] Afshin, who served as the caliphate’s Chief of the Army, was compelled to fight against Babak; and after a great deal of struggle, he captured Babak and took him to Baghdad, where he was eventually killed. Yet, the caliphate, who always despised Iranians, soon killed its own Chief of the Army Afshin, who was a source of good deeds for the caliphate, making this hero’s efforts to regain the country’s independence futile.¹⁷

ACT TWO: BABAK AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE IRANIAN SUBALTERN

Following Sa'id Nafisi, there were other writers or historians who dealt with Babak's revolt.¹⁸ Ehsan Tabari's treatment of the topic seems to be quite distinctive both in form and in content. As a leading theoretician of the Tudeh Party, Tabari's analysis is informed by Stalinist historiography in that he attempts to exaggerate both the territorial significance of Babak's revolt and his adherence to class struggle with equal measures.

In the introduction to his work on Babak Khorramdin, Tabari asserts, "In the early centuries of the Arab hegemony, the main social context in which the Iranian people's movements took place was against the Arab caliphate. Within this context, two different orientations should be distinguished from each other: the first orientation was the *liberation* struggle in order to crush the oppressive shackles of the foreigners; the second orientation was the class struggle of the peasants and urban poor against feudal-aristocratic government including Iranians or Arabs that was materialized and manifested in the Abbasids."¹⁹ He then contends, "Since only Marxism-Leninism renders sound scientific evidence for research and analysis of social phenomena, the best way to acquire the intrinsic causes of the many gesticulations that have occurred in the turbulent sea of the Iranian people's life is to juxtapose this perspective with the thrilling account of humankind."²⁰

For Tabari, like Nafisi, Babak remained an "Iranian hero" who headed "one of the greatest social movements in a geographically wide region of western Iran following the Arab domination"²¹ By stressing Babak's and Afshin's Iranian identity, Tabari alleged that the former, in his struggle against the caliphate, endeavored to persuade Afshin to unite with him.²² While he highlighted the ethnic dimension of Babak's revolt, Tabari also argued that this movement enjoyed significant support from the peasants and the poor: "Babak rose from the poor masses of the people and in his struggle he enjoyed the support of the peasants, the shepherds and the urban poor. Indeed, they considered him as their true representative and the guardian of their national as well as class interests."²³

ACT THREE: BABAK AS THE INFIDEL OTHER

In addition to various Stalinist and nationalist interpretations of identity formation in Iran, during the Pahlavi period, few Islamist or Islamicist scholars narrated Iran's history, especially the history of the Islamic period. One may single out Morteza Motahhari as the most eminent scholar of this trend who, in his *The Mutual Contribution between Islam and Iran* (*Khadamat-e Moteqabel-e Eslām va Iran*), vehemently challenged the nationalist historiography of the Pahlavi era, arguing that contesting Arabs and Arabism (*'Arabiyat*) is part of a "well-orchestrated and well-calculated camping to abuse Islam behind the mask of defending Iranian nationality."²⁴

The propaganda surrounding Zoroastrianism, which has gathered pace and has become popular these days, is a well-calculated political campaign. In today's Iran, no one will ever convert to Zoroastrianism. Zoroastrian teachings will never replace Islamic teachings. Mazdaki, Manichaean, and Zoroastrian personalities and all those who are being falsely introduced as "national characters" bear no characteristics other than deviation from Islamic teachings, whether they oppose Islam explicitly or use the struggle against the Arab ethnicity as a pretext, they will never

ever replace Islamic heroes in Iranians' hearts. Never will Al-Muqanna' and Sanbad and Babak Khorramdin and Maziyar replace 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib and Husayn Ibn 'Ali and even Salman Farsi in the hearts of Iranians. Everyone knows about these issues.²⁵

In Motahhari's reading of the early period of Islam, the Iranians not only converted to Islam wholeheartedly but also incorporated their ethno-linguistic characteristics into the new faith and therefore created a unique notion of Islamic-Iranian identity, which according to Motahhari, was quite inseparable. Furthermore, in his reference to the "sporadic" resistances to the Islamic political and cultural establishment, Motahhari was convinced that the isolated confrontations were soon dealt with not by merely Arabs, but by Iranians themselves who acted as guardians of Islam: "Fortunately, since the beginning of Islam up to the present whenever some people have made noise about the revival of Iran's ancient rituals and traditions, they have faced the Iranian nation's wrath, to the point that the likes of Bahafarid, Sandbad and Babak and Maziyar have been crushed by the hands of Iranians such as Abu-Muslim and Afshin and countless soldiers of this country."²⁶

ACT FOUR: BABAK AS THE SUBJECT OF PRACTICING SELECTED AMNESIA

Motahhari vigorously denounced Pahlavi nationalist historiography, which widely acknowledged Babak as a national hero. Later on, his firm stance against Babak served as a departure point for the postrevolutionary Islamic state to re-craft Iranians' past identity. In the national curriculum of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Motahhari's construct of the Islamic-Iranian identity remains the prevailing paradigm. However, with the passage of time, total denouncement of Babak, and historical figures like him, gradually disappeared from public discourse and eventually became subject to selected amnesia. Evidently, the official historians of the Islamic Republic such as Rasul Jafarian, Abdulrasul Khayrandish, Mas'ud Javadiyan and Javad 'Abbasi have opted for carefully measured and skilfully chiselled narratives rather than uttering obscenities and profanities at the likes of Babak.

Following a detailed account of the Abbasid caliphate and its interactions with the Shi'i establishment in the second-grade history curriculum of the middle school, the author(s) briefly stated, "During the Abbasids' reign, someone known as Babak rose up against the caliphate in Azerbaijan. Babak was the caliphate's enemy and managed to inflict a series of defeats upon his army. He and his army created numerous difficulties for the caliphate but, eventually, the caliphate's army defeated them."²⁷

Ironically, most of these authors seem to venture into history in order to conceal Babak's religious conviction and portray him more as an Iranian without any religious affinity other than Islam. In doing so, they embark on sieving historical evidence through contemporary political and ideological filters and craftily construe self-justifying facts mainly echoing distortion and circulating misinformation. For example, Rasul Jafariyan writes, "Utilizing public dissatisfaction with the Abbasids and propagating new ideas, which were a combination of Zoroastrian, Mazdaki, Ma'navi and Islamic traditions, Babak Khorramdin revolted against the rule of caliphate. Babak fought against the Tahirids and the Abbasids' armies for nearly twenty years. He was, however, defeated and hanged in Samarra."²⁸

Indeed, the process of “appropriating” (*khudi kardan*) of Babak has been part of a larger campaign to culturally dishearten some Azerbaijani activists who, since the early 1990s, endeavored to portray Babak as an icon of their distinct identity.

ACT FIVE: BABAK AS AN AZERBAIJANI TURK

By the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988 and during the period of relative liberalization of the presidency of Rafsanjani, the call for the recognition of ethnic minorities' rights was gradually translated into a broader discourse on individualism, individual autonomy and citizenship solidarity, and rights, which had become the main preoccupation of Iranian reformist circles. Such developments became more apparent during President Khatami's term of creating strong ties between the question of citizenship and individualism on the one hand and the rights of ethnic minorities on the other.

The most articulated manifestation of such ties was the rapid increase of the number of books and periodicals published in ethnic languages. Moreover, a large number of intellectuals from ethnic minority backgrounds began writing on ethnic groups as part of broader intellectual enterprise during this period. Writing ethnic history has developed into a persuasive political project shaping a significant unbroken link with each ethnic group's constructed past with the aim of filling the gap between the ethnic groups' origins and their actuality. Books on local geography and ethnic history constitute the main part of these publications. The preservation of historical traditions, grassroots involvement, and the rediscovery of past traditions, both immediate and distant, have become the preoccupation of large segments of intellectuals whose aim was to legitimize their call for equal rights for their respective ethnic groups. However, the most cognizant step taken by certain ethnic groups, such as Azeris, was the local intellectuals' effort to link their scholarly engagement with the political culture to influence the latter accordingly.

In 1999, Mohammad Taqi Zehtabi, an Azerbaijani linguist published his two-volume *The Ancient History of Iranian Turks (Iran Turklerinin Eski Tarihî)*,²⁹ covering the history, geography, and philology of the northwest Iran as well as the northern bank of the Aras (Araxes) River from “earliest times” to the Islamic period.³⁰ In his concluding remarks, Zehtabi, blames the failure of the Persians to uphold Iran's sovereignty and praises the Azerbaijani Turks for their leading role in the Iranian plateau to secure the country's integrity whenever she was occupied by the neighboring empires.³¹ His pre-Islamic example is the “Parthian Turks” who put an end to the rule of Macedonian Seleucids. As far as the Islamic period is concerned, he names Babak Khorramdin as an Azeri Turk who “stood against Baghdad” and “demonstrated the vulnerability of the Islamic caliphate.”³²

In his effort to present Babak as an Azerbaijani hero with a strong regional identity, Zehtabi follows in the footsteps of the historians of the Republic of Azerbaijan. In the national historiography of the neighboring Republic of Azerbaijan, Babak is acknowledged as a national hero of Turks. While containing some erroneous information, the country's national curriculum indicates that “[Babak] is a prominent Azerbaijani commander and a political leader . . . Under Babak's leadership, the people of Azerbaijan struggled against the religion of Islam, the Arab slavery and the feudal oppression. [His] movement was the most influential in the Near and Middle East in the Middle Ages [misinformation by the author] . . . Under Babak's

guidance, people's liberation movement furnishes one of the brightest pages of the history of Azerbaijan . . . Babak's movement facilitated the neighboring nations' struggle for freedom."³³

However, the implication of Zehtabi's remarks on Babak's ethnic origin soon crossed the borders of academic enquiry and entered public space. Zehtabi's discovery of Babak's identity as an Azeri Turk was almost immediately followed by his call to pay homage to the Fort of Bazz (*Qalleh Bazz*, now *Qalleh Babak*) during the first week of summer. Eventually, Zehtabi's proposed pilgrimage turned into a public picnic celebration where a large number of Azerbaijanis congregate at the Fort of Bazz to celebrate Babak's alleged birthday, better known as Babak's Day. Although the entertainment dimension of the event is much more discernible, the public performance of folk and traditional Azeri dance and music not only defies the government's general ban on public performance of music and dance, but it also helps to strengthen communal solidarity accentuating a new sense of Azerbaijani-ness.

The popularity of Babak's Day, however, jolted certain individuals in the Iranian political establishment. Various sanctions, including allocating the site to the Mobilization Resistance Forces of the Islamic Revolution's Guard Corps (*Basij*) or setting up roadblocks, were imposed on those who attempted to reach the fort on Babak's Day. Although these measures resulted in a total ban of the event by the government, such festivities portrayed momentarily a concerted effort to promote social liberties with a strong will to articulate a collective identity, thus distinguishing Azeris from others.

Arguably, Azerbaijanis' engagement in events of this nature was an indication of a political desire to gain certain rights such as promotion of native education and administrative autonomy. Evidently, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the establishment of a sovereign state of the Republic of Azerbaijan have influenced certain political developments with unpredictable side effects within Iran's Azerbaijan. This impelled some historians, with a strong affiliation to the central state in Iran, to adopt a new cultural strategy toward the question of Babak's identity.

ACT SIX: BABAK AS A SHI'I MUSLIM. WHEN A CROW TURNS INTO A NIGHTINGALE

The process of appropriating of Babak in Iran in recent years, continued to the extent that some historian argued that the roots of Babak's revolt was nothing but his deep Shi'i conviction denouncing Sunni Baghdad. The new narratives not only postulate Babak as Muslim but even argue that his affinity with Shi'ism made his Islam different from the Islam of Baghdad.

In an interview with the Iranian Cultural Heritage News Agency, an Iranian historian, Abbas Zarei Mehrvarz, who has published some articles and a book on Babak,³⁴ argues, "Babak was a Muslim. However, his Islam was different from the official Islam of the state [the Abbasid caliphate]. I suspect that he was inclined toward 'Alavism and Shi'ism."³⁵

The attempt to present Babak as a Shi'i soon gained momentum and became a key line of enquiry with its own merits. One who endorsed it was Rasul Razavi who in his book *Babak and Historiographical Critique* (*Babak va Naqd-e Tarikh-negari*) rejected all previous assumptions on Babak, arguing that the historiography of Babak had been influenced by Western scholars' schemes to challenge Islam by exploiting themes such as ethnicity, nationalism, and historical materialism: "The

reason Iranian nationalists, following Westerners, show inclination to analyze the Iranian uprisings from the nationalist perspective lies in the fact that after the introduction of Islam to Iran, which faced no serious resistance, no major uprising, with patriotic slogans, took place and no one revolted against the Arab whilst claiming to have been affiliated to Zoroastrians or the Sassanid and almost all major uprisings revolved around religion or religious faction, especially that of the Shiite Islam."³⁶

According to Razavi, in Babak's era there were only two "racial" groups living in Azerbaijan—*Azeri-e 'Ajams* and the *Javidaniyeh*: "At the time, there was no trace of the Turkic ethnicity in Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan saw the earliest presence of the Turks in the course of the battle between Afshin's army and the Javidanis."³⁷

Razavi further considered Babak as a Persian-speaking Iranian and an adherent of the Javidaniyeh sect.³⁸ On the religion of the Javidaniyeh, Razavi asserts that the Javidaniyeh, whose movement was rooted in Shi'i Islam, believed in the doctrine of reappearance of the ultimate savior of humankind.³⁹ However, unlike Twelver Shi'is, who believe in the reappearance of Mahdi (the Shi'i Twelfth Imam), the Javidaniyeh believed in the reappearance of Kazim, the son of the Shi'i Sixth Imam Ja'far Sadiq who, according to the Javidaniyeh, was in occultation.⁴⁰

Babak and his Javidani supporters' revolt, in Razavi's opinion, was an egalitarian Shi'i movement challenging the Sunni aristocratic rule of Baghdad.⁴¹ In their endeavor, they enjoyed the extended support of not only Azerbaijanis but also the people of central Iran including Qum and Kashan. Nonetheless, followers of this movement, which Razavi prefers to label as "*Javidaniyeh-Kazimiyeh*," could not withstand the power of the Sunni enemy and, hence, were crushed eventually. Rasul Razavi believes that because of the sheer massacre of the Javidanis, there seemed to be no Javidani left to record details of what actually happened to them.⁴²

CRAFTING IDENTITY: A POLITICAL PROJECT

In the 1860s, Massimo d'Azeglio, a prominent Italian nationalist activist stated, "We have made Italy, now we have to make Italians." While Italy's geographical characteristics are distinctive from Iran's, the extent to which d'Azeglio's assertion about Italian identity can be applicable to Iran remains debatable. However, his well-worded aphorism implies that the construction of national identity could be perceived as a political project that could also be altered over time.

In Iran, the idea of recomposition of modern national identity, attuned to Iran's territorial boundaries, has developed in conjunction with her ethnic, linguistic, religious, and political hybrid cultures. Such identity building can be considered as a work in progress and is often juxtaposed with the changing of people's shared public memories and political system.

Prior to 1900, Iranian borders were predominantly elastic. The Safavids' attempt in the early sixteenth century to introduce greater political unity through centralization and institutionalization of Shi'ism created a new defensive identity in relation to those Iranians who lived beyond their borders. For the Safavids' Persian subjects defined themselves not by their own "national" characteristics, but rather by local exclusion, for example, through creating a negative image comparing themselves with their immediate Sunni Muslim neighbors.

Regardless of the specification of the national identity during the Safavid period, the considerable growth of dynastic allegiance led to the emergence of Iran (then

Persia) as a defined territorial entity stretching from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. This process took on a more concrete shape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the introduction of the first semimodern European maps of the country. The mapping of Iran as such, mainly based on the Safavid territorial expansion, was, however, different from the ancient design of the Persian Empire. In the premodern period, the threat of the Ottoman expansionism made the European powers concerned about the boundaries of their much-hated neighbor.

When, following the fall of the Safavids, the Ottomans seized the northwest of Iran in 1736, Nader Shah demanded the return of those territories to Iran insisting on Iran's recognized borders. It is noteworthy that Nader's reference to Iran's recognized borders during the Safavid era became a standard reference for successive rulers. Karim Khan Zand and Aqa Muhammad Khan Qajar also used the same argument for similar settlements of land disputes. Throughout the Qajar era, reference to the Safavid mapping of Iran was a common discourse in the Iranian diplomatic correspondences creating the mass psychology of Iranian-ness.

The foundation of modern Iran in the post-World War I period, during the reign of Reza Shah with the motto of "*yek mamlekat, yek mellat*" (one country, one nation), was associated with the introduction of Iran's designated borders. Obviously, the concept behind such demarcated territory was different from the civilizational boundaries of Iran (*hozeh-ye tamaddon-ye Irani*) or the Safavid mental mapping. However, the newly demarked territory virtually mirrored the bulk of the Safavid territories. If in the Safavid mapping of Iran a certain degree of ethnic or linguistic diversity had been tolerable, in the construction of the new territorial identity of Iran in the aftermath of the World War I, Persianization of her inhabitants became the main priority. Therefore, such a new identity necessitated a new definition of nation.

In 1926, almost ten years before Sa'id Nafisi published his work on Babak, another Iranian leading thinker Mahmud Afshar proclaimed a new definition of nation. According to Afshar, a nation was "a group of people who are united on the basis of common race/ethnicity, religion, social life, and history, who have lived together on the common land for centuries."⁴³ Underlining the centrality of political culture, Afshar explained the reasons behind accommodating the Persian as the national language of Iran in the following manner:

What I mean by the national unity of Iran is a political, cultural, and social unity of the people who live within the present-day boundaries of Iran. This unity includes two other concepts, namely, the maintenance of political independence and the geographical integrity of Iran. However, achieving national unity means that the Persian language must be established throughout the whole country, that regional differences in clothing, customs and such like must disappear, and that *moluk al-tavayef* (the local chieftains) must be eliminated. Kurds, Lors, Qashqa'is, Arabs, Turks, Turkmen, etc., shall not differ from one another by wearing different clothes or speaking a different language. In my opinion, until national unity is achieved in Iran, with regard to customs, clothing, and so forth, the possibility of our political independence and geographical integrity being endangered will always remain.⁴⁴

The authoritarian modernization, practiced throughout the Pahlavi era, was crafted with an illusion that modernization gradually would break down traditional

allegiances and expose individuals to new opportunities. Consequently, urbanization, industrialization, education, communication, and improved transportation were supposed to lead ethnic and religious communities to ultimate national integrity in Iran. Indeed, Afshar's definition of nation was in tune with the then propagated policy of the state.

However, during Mohammad Reza Shah's reign, especially toward its end, there were others who proposed other definitions of nation and national identity. The Islamist scholar Morteza Motahhari, one of the leading architects of the Islamic Revolution denied that shared ethnicity, language, or even territoriality shaped a nation and instead professed a premodern definition of nation (*mellat*) as it was employed in the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish languages. This definition of nation corresponds above all with the followers of a particular faith or religion.⁴⁵ Consequently, in his definition of nation, religion—such as Islam—occupies the major share. He further adopts the “nation of Islam” analogous to the “nation of Iran.”⁴⁶ Besides, for Motahhari, Islamic identity could be substituted by other identities: “This is an obvious issue that in the religion of Islam, the way nationality and ethnicity are nowadays characterized amongst people bears no validity, nonetheless this religion [Islam] treats all different ethnicities equally, and, right from the outset, Islam's appeal has not been exclusive to any particular nation and ethnicity.”⁴⁷

However, such perception of nation and national identity needs shared public memories unifying inhabitants of the countries in a world structured according to the nation-state systems. The production of a new hybrid culture amalgamating the transterritorial Islamic past with today's shared territorial history often seems to be essential for the construction of a new hybrid identity. In creating such a hybrid identity, stones, buildings, papers, tales, communal heroes, and liberating myths are carefully exploited as natural components of the new Islamic transnational as well as national territories. While these components are often used for politically motivated mobilizations, it should concurrently be cross-checked if they ever expose any challenge to the legitimacy of the Islamic faith. To embark upon such a delicate process of Islamicization or more precisely the Shi'ization of the Iranian past, the call for certain invention, exclusion, or a selected amnesia is needed. Accordingly, the past, by passing through a national engineering, arrives at the present public space and crafts the new identity of Islamic nation, the *ummah*.

Therefore, as far as the process of invention is concerned, the “Javidaniyeh-Kazimiyeh” and Babak's alleged conviction to that religious group is tangibly used as a means to justify the end. Also, the process of exclusion is manifested in denying Babak's attempt to seek support from the Byzantine Emperor Theophius to eradicate the Islamic caliphate. Finally, the process of selected amnesia is carefully implemented to trace Babak's distant ancestors back to a non-Muslim community in northwestern Iran, while, at the same time, an effort is made to tie his immediate ancestors to a Muslim origin.

CONCLUSION

The shifting nature of twentieth-century historiography set out to explain the emergence and peculiarities of Iranian national identity. Despite numerous institutional attempts and counterattempts in constructing and deconstructing miscellaneous identities of Iranians, the making of Iranian national identity remains

to be a fascinating exploration of Iranian-ness and what it means to be Iranian. The nation's twentieth-century historiography exhibits the historian's endeavor to construct distinct national identities and craft histories based on political schemes. Evidently, this process has resulted in creation of sentimental fiction, grotesque denial or deliberate falsification of historical or traditional realities, and ideologically biased representations. Nonetheless, the issue of Babak's identity has ironically necessitated an unholy assemblage of historians of ethno-nationalist, Islamic, and Stalinist traditions.

NOTES

1. Ahmad b. Yahya Baladhuri, *Futuh al-Buldan* (Cairo: 1957), 400–406.
2. Muhamamd Ibn-Ishaq Ibn-Nadim, *al-Fihrist*, trans. Mohammad Reza Tajaddod Mazandarani, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Ibn-Sina, 1967), 611. For the other references see Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad Ibn-Ahmad AlMuqaddasi, *Ahsan al-Ta'asim fi Ma'rifat al-Aqalim*, trans. 'Alinaqi Monzavi (Tehran: Sherkat Mo'alefan va Motarjeman Iran, 1982); Hasan Ibn-'Ali Nizam al-Mulk, *Siyasat-Nameh* (Tehran: Asatir, 1996); Abd al-Qahir Baghdadi, *al-Farq bain al-Firaq*, trans. Muhammad Javad Mashkour, In Persian translation, the title changed to *Tarikh Mazahab-e Islam* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1965); Abulhasan 'Ali Ibn Husayn Mas'udi, *al-Tanbih va Al-Ishraf*, trans. Abolqasem Payandeh, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Entesharat 'Elmi va Farhangi, 1986); Abulhasan 'Ali Ibn-Hussein Mas'udi, *Murravaj al-Zahab va Ma'adin al-Javahir*, trans. Abolqasem Payandeh, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Entesharat 'Elmi va Farhangi, 1986); Ahmad Ibn-Ishaq Ya'qubi, *Tarikh Ya'qubi* (Leiden, Brill, 1883); Abu Hanifeh Ahmad Ibn-Davud Dinvari, *Akhbar al-Taval*, trans. Mahmud Mahdavi Damghani (Tehran: Nashr No, 1986).
3. For example, see Hasan Ibn-'Ali Nizam al-Mulk, op. cit., 280–88.
4. Khorramdinan were the followers of Khorramdin or Khorramiyeh religious sect. For a comprehensive study of Khorramdin, see Gholam Hosein Sadighi, *Les Mouvements religieuse Iraniens au IIe et au IIIe siècle de l'hégire* (Paris: Les Presses Modernes, 1938), and Ehsan Yarshater, "Mazdakism" in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
5. Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, *Ayineh Sekandari*, ed. Jahangir Khan Motarjem al-Mamalek Shirazi (Tehran: n.p., 1908), 1:574–75.
6. Sa'id Nafisi, *Babak Khorramdin, Delavar-e Azarbayjan* (Tehran: Ibn-Sina, 1954).
7. Ibid., 5.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 38.
11. Ibid., 7.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., 8.
14. Ibid., 32.
15. Ibid., 31.
16. Parviz Natel Khanlari, *Tarikh-e Iran. For the 6th Grade* (Tehran: Sherkat Sahami Tab' va Nashr Ketab-hay Darsi Iran, 1967), 17–18.
17. Ibid.
18. See, for example, Sadeq Hedayat's *Maziya* and Abdolhosayn Zarrinkub's *Do Qarn Sukut*.
19. Ehsan Tabari, *Barkhi Barrasiha dar bareh-ye Jonbeshha-ye Ejtema'i dar Iran* (n.p., n.d.), 166 (emphasis mine). For a romantic depiction of Babak by Ehsan Tabari, see "Marg-e Babak," *Donya* 4, no. 1–2 (1963).
20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., 167.
22. Ibid., 170.
23. Ibid.
24. Morteza Motahhari, *Khadamat-e Moteqabel-e Islam va Iran*, 8th ed. (Tehran: Daftar Entesharat Islami, 1979), 36–37.
25. Ibid., 37.
26. Ibid., 89.
27. Masud Javadiyan, Abdulrasul Khayandish, and Javad Abbasi, *Tarikh-e Dovvom-e Rahnama'i* (Tehran: Islamic Republic of Iran, Vezarat Amuzesh va Parvaresh, Daftar Barnamehrizi va Ta'lif Kotob Darsi, 2007), 21.
28. Rasul Ja'fariyan and Abdulrasul Khayandish, *Tarikh-e Eslam va Dowlatha-ye Mosalman, Sal-e Sevvom, Nezam-e Jadid Amuzesh-e Motevaseteh, Reshteh-ye Adabiyat va 'Olum-e Ensani* (Tehran: Islamic Republic of Iran, Vezarat Amuzesh va Parvaresh, Daftar Barnamehrizi va Ta'lif Kotob Darsi, 1995), 86.
29. Mohammad Taqi Zehtabi, as a follower of Azerbaijan Democrat Party (*Azarbaijan Demokrat Ferqasi*), migrated to the Soviet Union following the fall of the party's one-year rule in Azerbaijan in 1946. After spending three years in the Siberian prison camp, he finally reached Baku where he studied Turkic philology. In 1979, following the Iranian Revolution of 1978–1982, he returned to Tabriz and lived there until his death in 1998. Zehtabi published a number of books on Azerbaijani philology and literature. However, his main focus remained on the ancient history of Iranian Turks—see Mohammad Taqi Zehtabi, *Iran Turklerinin Eski Tarikhi*, in two volumes (Tabriz: Akhtar, 1999).
30. For an outline of Zehtabi's work see Touraj Atabaki, "Ethnic Minorities, Regionalism, and Construction of New Histories," in *Iran und iranisch geprägte Kulturen*, ed. Markus Ritter, Ralph Kauz, and Brigitt Hoffman (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2008).
31. Mohammad Taqi Zehtabi, op. cit., 2:570.
32. Ibid., 570–71.
33. Mail Demirli and Mahal Memmedli, *Azerbaijan Tarikhi. Muhazere Metinleri. Ali Mekteb Telebeleri ucun Ders Vesaiti*. (Baku: Tefekkur, 2000), 88–96.
34. Abbas Zare'i Mehrvarz and Allahyar Saleh, *Jonbesh-e Babak* (Tehran: Daneshgah Beheshti, 2004).
35. Abbas Zare'i Mehrvarz, an interview with the Iranian Cultural Heritage News Agency, May 2, 2005.
36. Rasul Razavi, *Babak va Naqd-e Tarikh-nigari* (Tabriz: Amin, 2001), 268.
37. Ibid., 160.
38. Ibid., 184.
39. Ibid., 161, 164.
40. Ibid., 285.
41. Ibid., 286.
42. Ibid., 320.
43. Mahmud Afshar, "Mas'alehe Melliyyat va Vahdate Melliye Iran," *Ayandeh* 2, no. 8 (1926): 560–61.
44. Mahmud Afshar, "Aghaznameh," *Ayandeh* 1, no. 1 (1925): 5.
45. The following lines are excerpts from the *Zobdat al-Asrar*, a nineteenth-century poetic work by Safi 'Alishah, which illustrate the religious significance of the term *mellat*:

Oh Christian, since you belong to the Jesus *mellat*
 You have no connection to the Islamic *mellat*

Safi 'Alishah, *Zubdat al-Asrar* (Tehran: Safi 'Alishah, 1962), 363.

46. Morteza Motahhari, op. cit., 33–60.
47. Ibid., 49.

PART II

EMPIRES AND ENCOUNTERS

CHAPTER 4

REBELS AND RENEGADES ON OTTOMAN-IRANIAN BORDERLANDS

POROUS FRONTIERS AND HYBRID IDENTITIES

FARIBA ZARINEBAF

THE HISTORY OF THE MIDDLE EAST in the early modern period was profoundly shaped by interstate conflicts, overlapping claims over border regions, religious tensions (Sunni-Shi'i), and warfare between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires. Except for few notable studies, the historians of the Ottoman Empire and Safavid Iran have not paid adequate attention to the impact of imperial rivalries on the borderland regions of Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, and eastern Anatolia that lasted for several hundred years.¹ The rise of the Shi'i Safavid state in the sixteenth century polarized the political and religious affinities of many communities who inhabited the frontiers of the two empires. The Ottoman state consolidated its hold over eastern Anatolia only in the sixteenth century after several major campaigns against Iran in 1514, 1535, and 1545. The Safavid threat persisted in the form of religious support to the Qizilbash and the Celali rebels as well as Ottoman princes who vied for succession to the throne. The Ottomans in turn lent support to the Sunni elites and tribal leaders who were alienated by Safavid extremist Shi'i policies against the Sunnis and the Christians in the Caucasus.

Borders in the early modern period remained porous and the identities of its inhabitants were flexible and hybrid. Regional leaders negotiated a more or less autonomous status with both states but had to take sides as the state of affairs became tense and led to warfare between the two states. This chapter will examine the impact of Ottoman and Safavid centralizing policies on their frontier regions and the tactics of local communities in maintaining their autonomy based on Safavid and Ottoman chronicles as well as Ottoman archival sources. Ottoman and Safavid dynastic politics sometimes had major implications for the border provinces

since princes often served as governors in these regions. Their rebellion as governors of border provinces was often a response to local struggle for autonomy as well as a claim of succession to the throne. Both states exchanged gifts at times of peace negotiation but imprisoned and killed envoys when the situation became tense and war was imminent.

A SAFAVID PRINCE IN ISTANBUL

The history of Ottoman-Safavid relations contains many examples of the shifting political loyalties of high-ranking officials turned renegade, rebellious princes, Kurdish local notables, and tribal leaders. Dynastic rivalry, tribal quest for autonomy, occupation, opportunism, and political maneuvering by central states were largely responsible for the constant shift in the political alliances and cross-border activities in the eastern frontier of the Ottoman Empire. The expansionist ambitions of both states posed a direct threat to semiautonomous frontier regions of eastern Anatolia, Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, and Shirvan in the sixteenth century.

Highly organized and equipped with gunpowder technology, the Ottoman army defeated the local tribal infantry and incorporated these regions one after another during the sixteenth century. Faced with a formidable and expansionist enemy in the West, the Safavid state formed its own central and professionally trained army recruited from Christian converts who were equipped with firearms purchased from Venice, Russia, and England. But tribal infantry remained the largest part of the Safavid army while the Ottoman Empire relied on the janissaries as well as the cavalry. Under the increasing power of the two imperial war machines, the local communities had no choice but to side with either one of these two states depending on political expediency their own standing.

While official histories tend to downplay the real causes of political betrayal and defection by these individuals and groups, Ottoman archival sources offer insightful glimpses into the backgrounds of many former Safavid officials, princes, and notables who ended up in the Ottoman Empire as refugees and defectors throughout the early modern period.

Both states followed an active policy of appeasement granting official titles and positions to regional tribal leaders and power holders. The Safavids tended to grant more administrative autonomy to frontier areas, but at times they too broke up and dispersed the rebellious Qizilbash and Kurdish tribes. Moreover, the Safavids used religious propaganda in Eastern Anatolia to gain an edge in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire, sometimes alienating the Sunni groups who lived in these regions.² When the Safavid threat became too unbearable, military confrontation became inevitable.

The subsequent Ottoman-Iranian wars of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries brought about economic devastation to the occupied territories and caused social dislocation for the inhabitants. Furthermore, they led to continued defection among the local notables and former officials.³ The religious policies of Shah Isma'il alienated the former members of the Sunni ruling class and religious establishment particularly in western Iran and the Caucasus. The official Safavid histories did not record the coercive policies of Shah Isma'il and the extent of resistance to his rule in Shirvan, Ganja, and Azerbaijan. The official Ottoman accounts, on the other hand,

constantly referred to violent measures used by the founder of the Shi'i state, giving rise to several waves of Sunni refugees into Anatolia.⁴

The invasion of Iran by the Ottoman Sultan Selim I (1512–20) in 1514 was largely a reaction against the Qizilbash threat within Anatolia. The Qizilbash were the Anatolian supporters of the Safavid Sufi order in Ardabil and were largely composed of Turkmen tribes.⁵ Known as Alevis in contemporary Turkey, the Qizilbash believed in an extremist expression (*gholat*) of Shi'ism. They continued lending financial and military assistance to Shah Isma'il after he came to power. The Shah Kulu rebellion in Anatolia in 1511 against Sultan Bayezid was largely inspired by the Qizilbash and their Safavid supporters.

From 1511 to 1512 the Shah Kulu rebels in Anatolia received much support from the Safavids. The rebellion gathered followers among many Qizilbash in Anatolia and was suppressed by Sultan Bayezid and his son, Prince Selim, who was the governor of Trabzon. The Safavid threat had become very serious since the Qizilbash enjoyed great following in Anatolia.⁶ Prince Selim led a bloodless coup against his father Bayezid II (1481–1512) with the support of the janissaries in 1512. After his accession to the throne, Sultan Selim ordered the killing of his brothers Ahmed (d. 1513) and Korkud (d. 1513) and his nephews (three sons of Mahmud and four sons of Ahmed), eliminating all potential contenders to the throne. In 1514, he led a large army that defeated Shah Isma'il in Chaldiran. He also ordered the persecution and forceful removal of more than forty thousand Qizilbash from Anatolia to the Balkans. He occupied Tabriz briefly in 1514 but withdrew shortly due to the harsh winter climate and a mutiny by the janissaries. It is highly possible that Selim used the Qizilbash threat to remove his father from power, suppress the Qizilbash, and consolidate his hold over eastern Anatolia by defeating Shah Isma'il in 1514.

After defeating Shah Isma'il in Chaldiran in 1514, Sultan Selim I occupied Tabriz and moved two thousand households of local notables, craftsmen, artists, and merchants to Amasya and Istanbul.⁷ The Akkuyunlu Sunni elite left for the Ottoman Empire, and many entered Ottoman service.⁸ He next moved into Syria and Egypt and defeated the Mamluks who had lent support to Shah Isma'il in 1517, expanding Ottoman rule over the former Mamluk kingdom. After the conquest of Mamluk Egypt, the Ottomans had emerged as the sole Sunni power in the Middle East. The Ottoman Sultan was the Caliph of all Sunni Muslims and the protector of the holy sites (Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem). The Safavids presented the only threat to Ottoman claims of Islamic legitimacy.

The Ottoman campaigns of the sixteenth century aimed at punishing the Qizilbash, defeating the Safavids and bringing the silk producing regions of Shirvan, Ganja, and Gilan under Ottoman control. The city of Tabriz, which was the most important silk entrepôt in the eastern Mediterranean trade zone, was the prime object of Ottoman campaigns in 1514, 1535, 1585, and 1725. The Safavid state also depended heavily on the revenues from silk trade and fought hard and long to maintain its control over the rich and strategically important provinces of Azerbaijan and Shirvan.⁹ Selim I's policy of economic blockade against the silk trade with Iran deprived the Shi'i merchants of their access to Bursa, where they had a large settlement in the fifteenth century. Trade soon resumed between the two states but the Iranian Armenian merchants dominated commerce due to Shah Abbas's favorable policies toward them and Ottoman discrimination against Iranian Shi'i

merchants.¹⁰ The eastern campaigns of Süleyman the Magnificent from 1534 to 1535 and in 1548 brought Erzurum, Van, and Iraq under Ottoman control, making the defense of Tabriz more challenging for the Safavids.

The local notables who accepted Ottoman rule and entered their service became part of the Ottoman provincial administration. The border provinces received a semiautonomous status first, but eventually came under direct central control. Under the Ottoman administration, the *timar* system (revenue grants in return for military service) integrated the sources of revenue to the center in districts like Erzurum and Diyarbakir but the economic make-up of tribal regions was little transformed in eastern Anatolia. For example, the Kurdish districts of Bitlis, Hak-kari, and Mahmudi remained hereditary principalities (*hukumet*) under the control of local notables.¹¹

Among Safavid defectors to the Ottoman side, we come across Safavid princes, former Qizilbash leaders, and Kurdish local notables of both Shi'i and Sunni backgrounds. The first interesting case concerns Alqâs Mîrzâ (b. 1515–16), the brother of Shah Tahmasb I who was appointed the governor of Shirvan in 1538. Shirvan was a predominantly Sunni region located along the western shores of the Caspian Sea and was ruled by the house of Shirvanshah, a local dynasty of various origins who held power since the pre-Islamic times.¹² Shah Isma'il defeated Farrukh Yasâr Shirvanshah in 1509 and appointed another local khan to Shirvan, which became an Iranian province.¹³ The rule of Shirvanshahs came formally to an end when a Safavid prince replaced the local Khan in 1538.

Local leaders of Sunni background in Shirvan rebelled against Safavid control and religious policies and asked for Ottoman assistance. They also gained the support of Alqâs Mîrzâ, the Safavid prince and governor who was competing with his brother for power.¹⁴ Safavid sources do not offer much information on Alqâs Mîrzâ's interaction with his brother or the cause of his alienation nor do we learn much about the local scene in Shirvan during his administration. The religious policies of Shah Isma'il in Shirvan and Georgia must have caused a great deal of animosity among the predominantly Sunni and Christian population. The Ottoman intervention was often the result of local call for assistance against the Qizilbash. This frontier province changed hands several times between the Ottomans and the Safavids. It fell under Ottoman control in 1578 but was taken back by Shah Abbâs I in 1607.

The rebellion of Alqâs Mîrzâ must be considered against this backdrop of religious and political division within this province. Eskandar Beg Monshî Rumlu (1560–1632), the official Safavid chronicler who relied on Hasan Rumlu's earlier account, was silent about local tensions in Shirvan. According to Monshî, Alqâs Mîrzâ regretted his actions and sought his brother's forgiveness through the mediation of their mother. He promised the shah not to engage in rebellion and furthermore, to cooperate in the invasion of Georgia and Circassia. But soon Alqâs Mîrzâ changed his mind and had coins minted in his name. Shah Tahmasb's troops led by his son Bahrâm Mîrzâ launched a crushing defeat on Alqâs Mîrzâ in Darband, forcing him to seek refuge with the Ottomans in the early spring of 1547.¹⁵

Sultan Süleyman who was looking for an opportunity to regain the control of Van from the Safavids, found a ready ally in Alqâs Mîrzâ.¹⁶ Alqâs fled to Crimea first and then crossed the Black Sea by boat into Istanbul and approached the Ottoman Sultan with an ambitious joint plan to invade Iran.¹⁷ The Sultan settled

him in a mansion in Istanbul after giving him a warm reception at the Topkapı Palace. He also sent him precious gifts in gold coins, silk robes, fine textiles, jewel-studded swords, daggers, and retainers to impress the young Persian prince with Ottoman show of generosity and friendship. Eskandar Beg Monshî blamed the Safavid prince for his betrayal, a view that was shared by the Ottoman historian, Peçevi (1574–1649). Monshî wrote,

Alqâs, that ignoramus, that ingrate, seduced by the words of a number of persons even more ignorant than himself, shortsightedly ruined his chances of happiness either in this world or the next by deserting a brother who treated him so lovingly and going to Anatolia. Sultan Sülaymân regarded his presence as an invaluable piece of good fortune, as presenting him with the means of subjugating Iran. Lured onward by this vain idea and beguiled by the baseless arguments of Alqâs Mîrzâ, Sultan Sülaymân launched another invasion of Iran. Shah Tahmasp loved Alqâs Mîrzâ more than his other brothers and always treated him with great kindness and tenderness. After the subjugation of Shirvan, the Shah elevated him above his other brothers and distinguished him by giving him the title Shirvanshah and placing the government and administration of that province in his hands so that his brothers envied him with this mark of royal favor and kindness.¹⁸

Alqâs Mîrzâ accompanied Sultan Süleyman in the Iranian campaign and took part in the occupation of Van and Shirvan in February 1548. He then persuaded the Sultan to turn his attention to the occupation of Tabriz in July 1548.¹⁹ The Sultan appointed Ulamâ Sultan Tekelu, the former Safavid governor of Tabriz who had defected earlier to the Ottoman side, as the *lala* (tutor) of the Safavid prince.²⁰ Sultan Süleyman wanted to offer the governorship of Tabriz to Alqâs Mîrzâ but did not trust his administrative policies.²¹ He instead dispatched Alqâs Mîrzâ to Qum and Kashan to win new victories. Meanwhile, Sultan Süleyman turned his attention to Anatolia to recapture Van from Haji Khan of the Kurdish Dunbuli tribe, who had served as the governor of Khuy in Azerbaijan. Haji Khan initially served the Ottomans but switched his allegiance to Iran when he was offered large pastures in western Azerbaijan.²² Haji Khan was killed by an Ottoman commander who sent his head to Aleppo where Sultan Süleyman was camping.

Meanwhile, Alqâs Mîrzâ was busy plundering Kashan and Hamadan but failed to push his conquests further into central Iran in November 1548.²³ To please the Sultan, he sent several camel-loads of silk-stuff, jeweled swords, precious stones, gilded Qur'ans, and illustrated manuscripts to Sultan Süleyman in Aleppo.²⁴ But when the Sultan's lack of enthusiasm and support became clear, Alqâs Mîrzâ made reconciliatory overtures to Shah Tahmasb, perhaps hoping to obtain reappointment to Shirvan in February 1546.²⁵ When Sultan Süleyman became aware of Alqâs's duplicity, he cut off his support.²⁶ Without sufficient men and provisions, the Kurdish forces loyal to the shah attacked the renegade prince. He was captured by Surkhâb Beg of the Kurdish Ardalân tribe in Sharizor and was surrendered to the shah. He spent a few days with Tahmasb who decided to hold him in the fortress-prison of Qahqahâ in May 1549. The Safavid prince was finally put to death six months later on October 11, 1549.

Ulamâ Sultan Tekelu, his collaborator, did not share his tragic fate. Ulamâ Sultan Tekelu was an Ottoman Sipahi who became a Qizilbash and defected to the Safavid side with his tribal followers during the Shah Kulu rebellion in 1511.²⁷

Shah Isma'il subsequently appointed Ulamâ Sultan as the governor of Tabriz. But the Tekelu tribe lost out in the internecine struggle among the Qizilbash for dominance in Azerbaijan after the death of Shah Isma'il in 1524.²⁸ Ulamâ Sultan vied for power and the title of military governor against Huseyn Khan Shamlû. In his quest for independence, Ulamâ Sultan marched against the shah's forces, but fearful of an immediate counterattack, he fled and took refuge in the fortress of Van, asking for Ottoman assistance in 1534.²⁹

As someone who was fully knowledgeable about local conditions in Azerbaijan, Ulamâ Sultan Tekelu rendered valuable services to Sultan Süleyman during this period.³⁰ Sultan Süleyman appointed him the governor of Hisnikayf. He cooperated with the Ottoman sultan in his first invasion of Iran from 1533 to 1534 and helped Sultan Süleyman take control of Tabriz and Baghdad in 1534.³¹ The Ottoman forces abandoned Tabriz a few days later due to shortage of supplies and the harsh winter climate, but Baghdad remained in Ottoman hands permanently. Ulamâ Sultan Tekelu then attacked Idris Bitlisî, the local khan of Bitlis who had switched over to the Safavid side. Ulamâ Sultan put Bitlisî to death and received the principality of Bitlis as a military fief. Ulamâ Sultan Tekelu was later appointed the governor of Bosnia, Hisnikeyf, and Erzurum.³² He was killed during the siege of the fortress of Lipve in Budin in 1551.³³

The treaty of Amasya signed between Shah Tahmasb I (1524–1576) and Süleyman the Magnificent (1520–66) on May 29, 1555, granted Van and Baghdad to Ottoman control but left Azerbaijan in Safavid hands. It maintained peace and relative calm between the two states for several decades. After the death of Shah Tahmasb in 1576, the invasion of Azerbaijan and Shirvan by Murad III (1574–95) in 1578 was inevitable.³⁴ The Ottomans used the Qizilbash provocations in Anatolia as an excuse to invade Iran and rejected offers of peace. The Ottomans occupied Azerbaijan and annexed it as an Ottoman province in 1585. Azerbaijan remained under Ottoman control until 1603 when Shah Abbas I defeated the Ottomans and drove them out of Azerbaijan. The two central states consolidated their control over the frontiers through coercion, appeasement, and religious propaganda. The net result of these policies left many local border communities divided, short of strong leadership, and lacking in effective resistance. Border skirmishes continued for some time, but the Amasya treaty brought about a relatively long period of peace between the two sides until 1578. It was briefly disrupted by the defection of prince Bayezid to Iran in 1559.

AN OTTOMAN PRINCE IN QAZVIN

The rebellion of prince Bayezid against his brother Selim and his father, Sultan Süleyman was very similar to Alqâs Mîrzâ's rebellion against his brother Shah Tahmasb. The Safavids and the Ottomans faced similar problems of dynastic politics and succession to the throne. The question of succession became a bloody struggle in the Ottoman Empire during the sixteenth century. The absence of a single principle of succession and rule of seniority among the male members of the dynasty led to rivalry between their mothers, factionalism in the palace and civil wars between the princes. Sultan Mehmed II (1444–46; 1451–81) institutionalized the practice of fratricide (the killing of princes) to eliminate any threat to his throne. After his death in 1481, rivalry between his two sons, Bayezid and Jem Sultan took on

international dimensions. Sultan Mehmed II favored prince Jem to the throne, who enjoyed some local support in Anatolia and among the janissaries. But prince Bayezid was able to defeat Jem Sultan, forcing him to flee with his family and supporters and seek refuge with the Mamluks, Knights of Rhodes, France, and the Papacy. Sultan Bayezid paid off the western rulers to keep Jem under their watch. Jem Sultan lived in exile for 13 years and finally died in Italy; his body was taken back and buried in Bursa in 1495.

Ottoman dynastic politics became closely entangled with their policy toward Iran. During Sultan Süleyman's reign (1520–66), the harem became closely involved in dynastic politics. One faction was formed around Sultan Süleyman's favorite concubine, Hürrem, their daughter Mihrimah Sultan, and her husband Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha in the imperial harem. The second faction was based in the provincial household of prince Mustafa (d. 1553) in Manisa, his mother Mahidevran and grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha, the husband of Süleyman's sister, Hadice Sultan.³⁵ Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha fell out of favor and was executed in 1536 following the termination of the first eastern campaign in 1535, no doubt at the instigation of Hürrem and her faction. Mustafa was the most qualified candidate for the throne on account of his experience and popularity among the janissaries and the cavalry.³⁶ His succession to the throne, however, would have brought about the death of Hürrem's four sons (Mehmed, Selim, Bayezid, and Cihangir) and the demotion of Rüstem Pasha who had replaced Ibrahim Pasha as grand vizier. Hürrem's faction in the palace in Istanbul was more successful against prince Mustafa, his mother and his followers in Manisa. Furthermore, Süleyman was deeply in love with Hürrem, whom he married in defiance of the Ottoman tradition. Hürrem gained much power over the affairs of the state and became *de facto* adviser to the Sultan. Süleyman's decision to eliminate Mustafa was no doubt made in consultation with Hürrem.³⁷ Prince Mustafa was captured on his way to visit his father in Konya and was executed in Süleyman's tent in 1553.³⁸

The tragic execution of prince Mustafa gave rise to an outburst of anger and defiance among the janissaries bringing about the downfall of Grand Vizier Rüstem Pasha. His dismissal did not last too long, and in less than two years he was reappointed grand vizier thanks to the pleas of his wife, Mihrimah Sultan (the daughter of Süleyman) and his mother-in-law Hürrem. Shortly after Mustafa's death, Hürrem's youngest hunchback son Cihangir fell ill and died, leaving Bayezid and Selim as the two contenders to the throne. With the elimination of Mustafa, Hürrem's favorite son Bayezid (b. 1526–62) hoped to succeed his father. But soon Bayezid became a victim to similar forces that had led to the death of his half-brother Mustafa.³⁹ Ottoman chroniclers offer a conspiracy theory with Lala Mustafa Pasha playing the central role.

Lala Mustafa Pasha served in the palace as head of imperial stables and was promoted to the head of larder by grand vizier Rüstem Pasha. Rüstem Pasha viewed him as an ambitious man determined to rise to the highest position in the palace. He, therefore, appointed him to provincial posts serving prince Bayezid and prince Selim as their tutor (*lala*).⁴⁰ Selim, Süleyman's oldest surviving son was the governor of Saruhan. His other son Bayezid was the governor of Kütahya and the potential successor to Ottoman throne. Süleyman favored Bayezid initially on account of Hürrem's support. But Hürrem's death in March 16, 1558, deprived the young prince of this important source of support.

Peçevi and Solak-Zâde relying on Mustafa Âli (1541–63), the chief scribe of Lala Mustafa Pasha during the Eastern campaigns, thought that Lala Mustafa Pasha was responsible for causing the rupture between the two brothers and Sultan Süleyman.⁴¹ According to Peçevi and Solak-Zâde, Lala Mustafa Pasha ordered the capture and murder of envoys carrying letters from Bayezid to his brother Selim and his father Süleyman to prevent any chance of reconciliation between them. Müneccimbaşı, on the other hand, blamed Bayezid for his disloyalty to his father.⁴² But he agreed with Peçevi and Solak-Zâde on the negative influence of his companions and close aides. Unaware of the intrigues of Lala Mustafa Pasha, prince Bayezid refused Süleyman's order to settle in Amasya in 1558. Dissatisfied with his new appointment and the size of his fief, Bayezid started gathering his own supporters that numbered around thirty thousand.⁴³ Şeyhülislam Ebusuud Efendi (d. 1574) issued a *fatva* at the order of the Sultan declaring his murder permissible as a rebel.⁴⁴ Prince Selim led an army against Bayezid and defeated him in the plain of Konya in May 30, 1559. Bayezid fled to Amasya and wrote a letter to his father, Sultan Süleyman, asking for forgiveness.⁴⁵

But Sultan Süleyman refused to pardon his son and instead sent another army led by the governor of Erzurum to capture Bayezid. Sultan Süleyman also sent a letter to Shah Tahmasb about the possibility of Bayezid's defection to Iran on July 25, 1559.⁴⁶ Süleyman issued several imperial orders to the governor of Silistre to confiscate the goods of Bayezid (tents, armor, manuscripts, and servants) and forward them to Istanbul on September 1, 1559.⁴⁷ Another order was issued to Ali Bey of Çanik to capture the followers of Bayezid. The governors of Erzurum, Van, Anatolia, and Karaman were ordered to look for Bayezid and report about his activities and contacts with Iran on September 17, 1559.⁴⁸ The defiant prince was left with no choice but to either surrender to his father and get killed or cross into Iran seeking refuge with Shah Tahmasb. He made contacts with the shah requesting his permission to enter Iran.

For the shah of Iran, this was a golden opportunity to take revenge for Süleyman's support of Alqâs Mîrzâ. Bayezid together with his four sons and ten to twelve thousand janissaries, pashas, and retainers were allowed to enter Iran in August 1559. The Shah sent his special envoy, Hasan Beg Ustajlu to receive prince Bayezid with much pomp and ceremony. Monshî offered a vivid description of the reception given to Bayezid in Qazvin and praised the generosity and kindness of Tahmasb toward the rebellious Ottoman prince.⁴⁹ This official view, however, disregards the political motivations of Tahmasb who used Bayezid as a bargaining chip to win points in the peace negotiations with Süleyman. Monshî was highly critical of Bayezid for his arrogance and ungratefulness.

Sultan Süleyman, prince Selim and Shah Tahmasb exchanged several letters about the surrender of Bayezid.⁵⁰ Shah Tahmasb initially refused to hand over Bayezid and instead tried to mediate reconciliation between the prince and his unforgiving father. The Shah's sympathy to prince Bayezid did not last too long when an aid named Arab Mehmed accused the Ottoman guest of honor of plotting to poison Tahmasb.⁵¹ The Shah immediately placed Bayezid and his sons under the house arrest and dispersed his followers around. In a vengeful frenzy, Shah Tahmasb began a series of negotiations with Sultan Süleyman and Prince Selim to hand over Bayezid in return for a reward in gold coins and the renewal of the peace treaty of Amasya.⁵² Once Tahmasb reached an agreement over the question of

Ottoman-Iranian borders, he surrendered Bayezid to the second Ottoman delegation led by Husrev Pasha who arrived in Qazvin in July 1561. The arrival of this delegation coincided with the death of grand vizier Rustem Pasha on July 12, 1561. The latter was a supporter of Bayezid and a foe of Lala Mustafa Pasha. The Ottoman executioner wasted no time in murdering Bayezid and his four sons after two years and half in exile on July 23, 1562.

The Ottoman envoys carried the coffins of the members of the house of Osman to Anatolia and buried them in Bursa next to the tomb of prince Mustafa. The Safavid Shah received a generous gift of four hundred thousand gold coins for his service to the Sultan.⁵³ The Sultan renewed the peace treaty of Amasya, which contained an important condition on the surrender defectors to either side.⁵⁴ According to both Peçevi and Solak-Zâde, the people of Qazvin mourned the cruel death of the exiled prince and were shocked by the duplicity of their ruler, Shah Tahmasb.⁵⁵ While the Ottoman chroniclers blamed cruel fate on the tragic death of Bayezid, Monshî was more partisan in covering up the responsibility of Shah Tahmasb in the following passage:

Since the alternatives open to the Shah were to break his sworn oath and destroy the peace and prosperity currently enjoyed by Muslims, or accede to the request made by the Ottoman Sultan, and thus perpetuate the peace and tranquility of the common people and the servants of God, he decided not to depart from the conditions of the treaty. He handed over Bayezid and his four sons, safe and unharmed to Khusraw Pasha . . . It never entered the Shah's mind that the Ottoman envoys would do physical harm to Bayezid while he was on Persian territory, but as soon as he was handed over, he and his four sons were immediately put to death on instructions from Sultan Süleyman, and their bodies were taken back to Istanbul.⁵⁶

This apology was hardly convincing since the exact procedure to hand over Bayezid and his sons had been negotiated for months between Shah Tahmasb, Prince Selim, and Sultan Süleyman. Moreover, it must have been clear to Tahmasb that the passage of Bayezid through Iranian territory could have generated many opportunities for the enemies of the shah to set him free.

The fates of Prince Alqâs Mîrzâ and prince Bayezid share interesting points. Both princes enjoyed support among the soldiers (Qizilbash and Janissaries), the harem, and courtly circles as well as local support among regional power holders who vied for independence from the center. After the defeat of their followers, they sought support with the enemy who used them as a bargaining chip in negotiating peace and a possible ally in warfare. Despite the renewal of the treaty of Amasya in 1562, border skirmishes continued by both sides that violated the terms of the treaty. The situation finally gave rise to the invasion of Iran by Murad III in March 1578. This period coincided with the outbreak of Celali rebellions in Anatolia in the late sixteenth century.

CELALI REBELS IN IRAN

The Celali rebellions broke out in response to economic crisis facing the Ottoman Empire and the spread of firearms to the countryside in the late sixteenth century. The Celalis were composed of disgruntled cavalrymen whose *timars* were

shrinking in size, landless peasants and part-time soldiers equipped with firearms and unemployed seminary students. The Celalis roamed the countryside and plundered villages, causing peasants to flee and take shelter in the cities. The Ottoman army was unable to completely defeat the Celalis and the state tried to co-opt many leaders with the promise of title and land. But the Celali rebellion of the late sixteenth century continued into the seventeenth century and coincided with the Ottoman-Iranian wars of 1603–1607.⁵⁷ Many Celali leaders defected as a group to Iran since Shah Abbas I (1587–1629) provided them with open support.

While Ottoman sources remain more or less silent on the Safavid connections of some important rebel leaders, Safavid accounts report at length about those who defected to Iran.⁵⁸ For example, Muhammad Pasha, known as Kalenderoğlu, the former governor of Homs in Syria was an important Celali leader who gathered a large number of followers in Anatolia and raided Bursa and other Anatolian towns.⁵⁹ Finally, the Ottoman army defeated him in 1607. Kalenderoğlu fled to the Iranian border and sent one of his men to Shah Abbas I in Isfahan to declare his allegiance and seek refuge in Iran. The Shah responded favorably and sent one of his leading statesmen and vizier, Hâtam Beg to receive the Celalis and to accompany them to Isfahan. Monshî, who was probably an eyewitness to some of the events in Tabriz, described at great length the kind hospitality and largesse shown to the Celali leaders and their ten thousand followers in Tabriz in the following passage:

The festivities began with the public banquet in the Bâg-e Jahânshahî. For several days, the chefs labored to prepare the food for it; about one hundred and twenty cooks and butlers were busy preparing all kinds of dishes, deserts, fruit, and nuts, and preserves. Prodigious quantities were prepared. A vast area of the garden where two thousand people could sit down to the feast, was set aside, and tents were erected and carpets were laid. The sixtieth day after the vizier's arrival in Tabriz was set as the date of the feast. The vizier decided in addition to the Celali commanders, from every hundred of their men twenty should be selected to receive a robe of honor. Thus, of the total ten thousand Celalis, two thousand received robes.

The robes of honor conferred on Muhammad Pasha comprised a brocade cloak; a velvet topcoat with gold embroidery; a kerchief all of gold, and a square embroidered with gold thread; a jeweled turban brooch; and a fine horse and saddle—gifts to the value of thirty Tomân in all.⁶⁰

This long and costly reception was seldom given to any foreign guest of honor. Tabriz was chosen as the site for this public display of anti-Ottoman sentiments, since Shah Abbas had just delivered the city from Ottoman hands. The Ottoman army, headed by Ibrahim Pasha, waited at the border for some time but finally decided to return and put off the expedition into Iran. The Celalis received official titles and land grants all over Iran.

Internal rivalry, however, among some of the leading Celalis led to their downfall. The Shah decided to disperse them and stifle their military strength by assigning them to campaigns against the Ottomans and the Kurds. Muhammad Pasha, a Celali leader participated with the Qizilbash in an expedition against the Kurdish Emir Khan, the head of Barâdûst tribe in Kurdistan who had rebelled against the shah in 1609. Emir Khan's rebellion ended up in the capture of the Domdom Fort by the Qizilbash, Emir Khan's capture and death and the massacre of his followers

including and the pro-Ottoman Mokrî Kurds.⁶¹ Muhammad Pasha received Emir Khan's land as a reward.

Meanwhile, Nasuh Pasha, the Ottoman governor of Diyarbekir, made overtures to some of the Celalis in Iran about an official amnesty by the Sultan if they left the service of the shah. Thousands of Celalis, who were unhappy about having to fight in the Safavid army, accepted this invitation and headed back home. The death of Muhammad Pasha, who was suffering from an illness in May 1610, caused further disharmony among the remaining Celalis in Iran.⁶² According to Monshî, of the ten thousand Celalis, only five hundred had remained in Iran by 1610. Despite this turn of events, some Celalis continued to maintain an open line of communication with Iran in order to enhance their own position vis-à-vis the Ottoman state.

Another well-known Ottoman official who became a Celali and subsequently defected to Iran was the Ottoman governor of Erzurum, Abaza Mehmed Pasha. Abaza Mehmed Pasha who was the governor of Erzurum and the brother-in-law of Grand Vizier Gürci Mehmed Pasha's brother; he enjoyed some support in the palace. He led a major rebellion when Sultan Osman II (1618–22) was overthrown and murdered during a palace coup led by the janissaries in 1622.⁶³ The janissaries were worried about the plans of Osman II to create an alternative army from recruits in Anatolia, Syria, and Egypt. They put in power Osman's uncle Mustafa I (1617–18; 1622–23) who ruled for 16 months and was deposed by the janissaries in favor of his nephew Murad IV, the son the powerful queen mother Kösem Sultan (favorite of Ahmed I). This was the first Ottoman regicide in the hands of the janissaries, who became deeply involved in dynastic politics and the overthrow of Ottoman sultans.⁶⁴ The janissaries were unhappy with their pay, which often fell in arrears, and Sultan Osman II's plan to create a parallel army from Anatolian recruits.

Abaza Mehmed Pasha did not recognize the legitimacy of Mustafa I even though the janissaries supported him. Abaza Mehmed Pasha marched into Istanbul with his army of forty thousand men, plundered the city, and arrested and killed many janissaries (about two thousand) whom he saw responsible for the murder of Osman II. Abaza represented the interests of the irregular troops and was in contact with Kösem Sultan, the mother of Murad IV (1623–40).⁶⁵ He sent a delegation to Shah Abbas I to declare his allegiance following the murder of Osman II in 1622. Shah Abbas was doubtful of his true intentions and stayed aloof to his overtures for a while, but finally bestowed the title of Khan upon him.⁶⁶ Acting in the manner of a Celali rebel, Abaza wanted to place Murad IV (1623–40) the half brother of Osman II on the throne.⁶⁷ After the final show down between Sultan Mustafa whom the janissaries initially supported and Kösem Sultan, the mother of Murad IV, Mustafa was deposed and the young Murad (11 years old) ascended the throne. Relieved by the news at the Ottoman capital, Abaza Mehmed switched his allegiance back to the Ottoman side, proving how prudent the Safavids had been in remaining cautious to his overtures.

Meanwhile in January 1624, an Ottoman commander rebelled against the governor of Baghdad and handed the keys of the fortress to the Safavids. This event led to the renewal of war between the Safavids and the Ottomans that lasted until 1639 when Baghdad was won again by Murad IV. Ottoman troops marched into Erzurum to punish Abaza who was still causing trouble in March 1628. Abaza once again approached the Safavids and promised to turn over to them several Ottoman

prisoners. Abaza sent his younger brother Küçük Abaza with more than one hundred retainers to Qazvin, where they were well-received by the shah. But before Shah Abbas was able to take Abaza under his protection, Hüsrev Pasha arrived to Erzurum and persuaded Abaza to remain in Ottoman camp.⁶⁸ Abaza was subsequently appointed the governor of Özü in the Balkans in 1632. He was finally brought back to Istanbul and murdered due to the intrigue of his opponents and at the order of Murad IV in 1634.

The Ottoman state won over many leading Celali leaders with investiture and official appointments and eliminated those who refused to put down their arms and defected to the Safavid side.⁶⁹ As these cases demonstrate, for many rebels taking refuge with the Safavids was an attractive option. But since the Safavids had not been particularly friendly with the Celalis and had used them for their own gain, Iran was no longer considered a safe haven. The assistance lent by the Safavid state to the Celalis, however, played an important role in shaping the Ottoman policy toward them. In other words, the Ottoman state had become more cautious in dealing with the Celalis who could always defect to Iran. The fact that ten thousand Celalis had settled in Iran and were financially supported by the Safavids played an important role in their ongoing rebellion. The Celali leaders used the Ottoman-Safavid animosity for their own end and while some succeeded, others like Abaza lost their lives at the end. The Ottoman state had a similar approach to defiant Qizilbash leaders.

THE QIZILBASH IN OTTOMAN SERVICE

As the state of affairs between Iran and the Ottoman Empire grew worse in the last quarter of the sixteenth century, Iranian subjects in the Ottoman Empire were subject to constant harassment by the authorities. Many Iranian women were taken into slavery, and some were married off to Ottoman men. According to several *fetvas* of the leading Ottoman religious figures like Şeyhülislam Ebusuud Efendi, Iranian prisoners of war could be taken into slavery and be forcefully converted to Sunni Islam. Furthermore, Ottoman provincial officials were ordered to hunt down the Qizilbash and mercilessly punish them.⁷⁰

When Murad III (1574–95) ascended the Ottoman throne in 1574, Shah Tahmasb sent a large delegation to Istanbul with a long letter of congratulation and gifts. However, Safavid delegates were under the constant watch of Ottoman officials to prevent them from making any contacts and giving donations to Qizilbash followers as they passed through Ottoman territory. The death of Shah Tahmasb in 1576 and the ensuing warfare among the Qizilbash provided an ample opportunity for the Ottomans to disregard the peace treaty and invade Iran in 1578. Ottoman forces occupied Shirvan, Shemakhi, Shaki, Ganja, and Georgia. An Iranian peace delegation led by Ibrahim Khan Turkhan arrived to Istanbul in 1582 asking for the withdrawal of Ottoman forces from the occupied provinces in the Caucasus. The Ottomans rejected Iranian demands and imprisoned the Safavid envoy and his 360 men.⁷¹

Some of these men were forced to convert to Sunni Islam. Ottoman chronicles make reference to the conversion of some Qizilbash officials who accompanied the Persian delegation in 1582. For example, *Shâhnâme-yi Murâd-i Salis* and the anonymous *Surnâme-i Hümayûn* (Imperial Festival Book) provide an official account of

the festival of 1582 with numerous miniatures. They depicted the public conversion to Sunni Islam of some Qizilbash during the festival.⁷² An interesting painting in *Shâhnâme-yi Murâd-i Salis* shows a Qizilbash in the company of some Ottoman *ulama* in the Hippodrome. He is depicted throwing down his Qizilbash turban, probably after conversion, to show his repentance in the presence of the Sultan who is watching the scene with great interest from his pavilion.⁷³ While this show was designed for public entertainment and propaganda purposes, some Qizilbash entered Ottoman service without having to convert to Sunni Islam when Ottoman armies occupied the border provinces.

Ottoman archival sources corroborate this trend and shed light on some of these individuals. According to a seventeenth-century Ottoman provincial appointment register (*Ru'us Defteri*) in 1632, Nazar Bey, a former Qizilbash and leader of the Danishmandlu tribe, defected to the Ottoman side with his tribe and his dependents and was given the position of the district governor of Malazgird in Anatolia.⁷⁴ The following year in July 1633, another former Qizilbash leader of the Danishmandlu tribe named Süleyman was given the governorship of the subdistrict of Kiği in the province of Erzurum. The reasons for the defection of these Qizilbash tribal leaders and the duration of their service are not provided in our source. But it is highly possible that Sultan Murad IV tried to win over some tribes in the border region before his eastern campaign in 1635.

The disintegration of the Safavid Empire brought to surface the political and religious tensions in the frontier regions between the various Kurdish tribes like the Mokri, Mahmudî, Ardalân, Hakkâri, and the Qizilbash.⁷⁵ The Afghan occupation of Iran in 1722 was followed by the Ottoman occupation of Azerbaijan, Kirman-shah, and Hamadan from 1723 to 1725.

Some members of the Safavid dynasty sought refuge with the Ottoman state as well. For example, the Ottoman state lent support to Tahmasb II (1722–1732) and recognized him as the legitimate ruler of Iran provided that he limited his rule to Ardabil, Qazvin, and Sultaniyya.⁷⁶ In addition, the Turkish archives contain some documents on a certain prince Sâm Mîrzâ (possibly a son of Tahmasb II) and his descendants who ended up in the Ottoman Empire and received a monthly pension as late as 1843.⁷⁷ According to this document, he died in the island of Limnos in 1764 leaving behind three wives, six sons, five daughters, and forty-four dependents who received a monthly pension of five hundred *kuruş* from the local treasury.⁷⁸ This document does not provide further information on why and how this Safavid prince or pretender took refuge in the Ottoman Empire and why he and his family received financial assistance for such a long time. A possible explanation would be that the Ottomans, in war with Nader Shah Afshar, had their own plan to set a member of the Safavid Dynasty on the Persian throne.⁷⁹ The silence of this document may indeed reflect political motivations on the part of the Ottoman central state to support a potential Safavid contender to the throne of Persia.

Consequently, the Ottoman armies moved into Azerbaijan, Kirmanshah, and Hamadan to maintain a close control over the affairs of the rest of Iran. Furthermore, given the strategic importance of the border provinces and the autonomous nature of their political structure, the policy of decentralized control by the Ottoman state seemed more feasible and practical in the long run. Since the Iranian provinces of Hamadan and Kirmanshah bordered on Iraq, their control was therefore crucial for the Ottomans to guarantee the safe movement of armies back and

forth. Once these provinces were occupied in 1725, many local notables who accepted Ottoman rule were reinstated with new titles and benefices. Part of this policy of appeasement was to give large tax farms in the form of *iltizams* (short-term tax farms) and *malikanes* (hereditary tax farms) to the Iranian elite who had entered Ottoman service.⁸⁰ It was only natural and politically convenient for many local notables like 'Abd al-Razzaq Beg (Shahsevan), Fereydun Khan (Kurdish), Hatam Khan (Kurdish), and others to seek their fortunes at the Ottoman camp once the fall of the Safavid state became imminent. Religious and economic factors also played an important part in their decision.⁸¹

An important local notable was Abdalbaki Pasha ('Abd al-Baqi Khan Zangana) who according to Ottoman sources, held large tracts of land as part of his ancestral *vaqf* lands in the districts of Hamadan and Kermanshah.⁸² This document has several interesting statements on the background of Abdalbaki Pasha according to which he served the Safavids and received part of the land grants as his *mulk* (private holding) in the districts of Tuysarkân and Brujîrd. The Ottomans reconfirmed his holdings at the recommendation of vizier Abdurrahman Pasha in March 1728 and accordingly, an imperial order was issued to give him a land deed (*mulknâme*). Furthermore, among some of his ancestors, 'Alî Beg the head of royal stables, Shaykh 'Alî Khan, Shah Qulî Khan, and Huseyn 'Alî Khan are noted for their Sunni background and devoted service to the Persian Shahs for more than one hundred years.⁸³ The document did not make it clear whether they served the Safavid or the Akkuyunlu Dynasty. Their Sunni background makes the Safavids an unlikely source of support although there were cases of Sunni notable households in Safavid service. Some of the landed estate was the *vaqf* of mosques and *madrasahs* of the Harameyn-i Sharifeyn (holy sanctuaries) in Mecca and Medina.⁸⁴ After the Ottoman occupation of these provinces, they reconfirmed the landed estate as the property of Abdalbaki Pasha, the district governor of Brujîrd and Tuysarkân and the military governor (*mirmiran*) of Hamadan as a reward for his honesty and service during the Ottoman-Iranian wars. We can speculate that the family of Abdalbaki Pasha, a local notable household of Sunni background, held important positions and vast tracts of land under the Akkuyunlu and the Safavids. Foreseeing the end of the Safavid Empire, however, the wise and ambitious Abdalbaki participated in the Ottoman-Iranian war of 1725 and was rewarded generously with land grants and administrative position. More importantly, he received back his confiscated large private property, villages, farmsteads, orchards, and mills. It was practical for the Ottomans to place in power the local notable families of Sunni background who had a track record of service to the Safavids and the Ottomans. This policy was also followed in Azerbaijan.⁸⁵

The landed estate that Abdalbaki Pasha was able to retain included shares in seventy villages, some gardens, and water mills in Hamadan and Kirmanshah. He held joint possession of some villages with the members of his extended family. The Ottoman state usually took over the properties in the occupied territories and sold them to the highest bidders among the Ottoman military establishment. But as this case demonstrates, some dispossessed local landed gentry managed to get back the control of their estates from the Ottomans in return for service. It is not mentioned at what point Abdalbaki had entered Ottoman service. But from the time of occupation in 1725 to his appointment in 1729, four years had passed during which Abdalbaki had ample time to prove his loyalty to Ottomans. Since we know that

Ottoman armies were pushed out of Iran two years later in 1730, we might ponder at the fate of Abdalbaki Pasha and other Iranians in his position.

The *Mühimme defterleri* (Register of Important Affairs) follows up on the story of Abdalbaki Pasha (Khan). He served as the Iranian envoy during the peace negotiations between Nadir Shah and Mahmud I in 1736.⁸⁶ The normalization of relations between the two states after the signing of the treaty of Kurdan in 1746 guaranteed safety of passage for merchants, envoys, and Iranian pilgrims to Mecca, Medina, Najaf, and Karbala.⁸⁷ Although the Ottomans rejected Shi'ism as the fifth Ja'fari *mazhab* (school of Islam), religious tensions and hostilities between the two states were relaxed after this treaty.⁸⁸ According to this treaty, the Ottoman government had to release Iranian captives and end their enslavement provided that the Iranians put an end to their anti-Sunni practices.

As someone who had served both the Safavids and the Ottomans, Abdalbaki Pasha enjoyed great insight into the mind-set of both states. His former contacts with the Ottomans played an important role in forging the new Ottoman-Iranian entente and in setting it on a regular course with the establishment of permanent embassies. Iranian merchants and pilgrims continued to have some problems in the Ottoman territories until the signing of the treaty of Erzurum in 1823, which granted freedom of trade and lower customs duties (4 percent) for Iranian merchants. With the appointment of consuls (*shahbenders*) and Emir al-Haj, Iranian merchants enjoyed better recourse to the Ottoman courts and government protection of their rights.⁸⁹ Border skirmishes continued for some time during this period. The nineteenth century witnessed the expansion of commerce between Iran and the Ottoman Empire, making Trabzon and Istanbul the ports of Tabriz. Tabriz had emerged as the major international commercial hub in Iran and its merchants once again were moving freely between Iran and the Ottoman Empire. In 1897, sixteen thousand Iranian subjects of mostly Azeri origins lived in Istanbul. The first Iranian embassy was established in Istanbul in the second half of the nineteenth century.

CONCLUSION

Both Ottoman and Safavid historiographies have paid very little attention to developments in the eastern borderlands of the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, present national boundaries have influenced the historiography of both empires. I have tried to show that the histories of Azerbaijan and Anatolia were closely intertwined in the early modern period. This was most evident in the rise of the Safavid millenarian movement that started in Azerbaijan and spread to Anatolia, where religious boundaries were still in flux but were being solidified in favor of orthodox Islam with the rise of Ottoman state. Socially, the attraction of Turkoman tribes to heterodox sufi orders was a reaction against the centralizing policies of the Ottoman state. The religious wars of the sixteenth century between the Ottoman Empire and Iran were in part motivated by strategic and economic concerns and led to defection among many tribal leaders and princes who vied for the throne. The control of rich agricultural lands in Azerbaijan as well as silk-producing regions and the commercial center of Tabriz promised the Ottomans prestige, wealth, and greater legitimacy in the Islamic world. Azerbaijan became a theater of war and an ideological battleground for almost three hundred years. The region's economy slowly recovered, but the Ottomans were never in Istanbul long enough to reap the

benefits of their appeasement policies; they were soon driven out in the next stage of warfare, together with the local elites who had submitted to them earlier. Only in the nineteenth century, with the relaxation of religious tensions and the expansion of the Russian Empire into the Caucasus, were the two empires able to negotiate lasting peace and open the region up to international trade.

NOTES

1. John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1976), 173–84; Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, *Les Ottomans, les Safavides, et leurs voisins, Contributions à l'histoire des relations internationales dans l'Orient islamique de 1514 à 1524* (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul, 1987). On the Ottoman-Russian frontier in the Caucasus, see Michael Kohdarkovsky, *Where Two Worlds Met: The Russian State and the Kalmyk Nomads, 1600–1771* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 58–72; Adel Alouche, *The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict, 1500–1555* (Berlin: Islamkundliche Untersuchungen, 1983).
2. Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, “Qizilbash Heresy and Rebellion in Ottoman Anatolia during the Sixteenth Century,” *Anatolia Moderna* 7 (Fall 1997): 1–15.
3. For an Ottoman account of a frontier Kurdish community during the seventeenth century, see, Robert Dankoff, *Evliya Çelebi in Bitlis* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990). For a local account, see Sharaf Khan Bidlisi, *Sharaf-Nâme*, 2 vols., ed. V. Veliaminof-Zernof (St. Petersburg, 1860–62).
4. For an Ottoman account of Shah Isma'il's coercive measures in Tabriz and Shirvan, see Hoca Sadeddin, *Tacüt-Tevârih*, Hazine 1346, Topkapı Saray Library, folio 356a–356b; for archival sources, see also Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *Osmanlı Devleti ile Azerbaycan Türk Hanlıkları Arasındaki Münasebetlere Dair Arşiv Belgeleri, 1575–1918*, 2 vols. (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, 1992–94); Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh, and State: On the Social and Political Organization of Kurdistan* ([n.p.], 1978), 167–68.
5. Zarinebaf-Shahr, “Qizilbash Heresy and Rebellion,” 1997.
6. *Ibid.*, 1997.
7. On the reception given to Selim and his army by the people of Tabriz see, Anonymous, *Selimnâme*, Revan 1540, Topkapı Saray Library, folios 141–15a (unpublished manuscript).
8. Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, “Cross-Cultural Contacts in Eurasia: Persianate Art in Ottoman Istanbul,” in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia and the Middle East, Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh Quinn (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006), 535–41.
9. Rudolph P. Mathee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran, Silk for Silver 1600–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Fariba Zarienbaf-Shahr, “Tabriz under Ottoman Rule, 1725–1730” (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 1991), 147–78.
10. Zarinebaf-Shahr, “Tabriz under Ottoman Rule,” 148–53.
11. Ahmet Akgündüz, *Osmanlı Kanunnameleri ve Hukuki Tablilleri* (Istanbul: Fey Vakfı, 1990), 3:214. See also the petition of Kurdish notables such as Idris Bitlisi expressing their submission to Selim I after his victory in Çaldıran in 1514, *ibid.*, 206–12. Bitlisi presented the demands of the local notables to Selim who renewed their hereditary landholdings.
12. W. Barthold, “Shîrwānshâh,” *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1934), 4:383.
13. *Ibid.*, 382.

14. Shah Isma'il attacked Shirvan several times and killed its ruler Farrukh Yasâr in 1509. He appointed a descendant of Shirvanshahs, Sultan Khalîl as the ruler of Shirvan and married his daughter Parî Khan Khânôm to him. Eskandar Beg Monshî, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, 2 vols. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1978), 1:131–37.
15. R. M. Savory, "Alkâs Mîrzâ," 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), 406; J. R. Walsh, "The Revolt of Alqâs Mîrzâ," *WZKM* 68 (1976): 61–78. See the text of two imperial orders sent by Tahmasb I to the notables of Shiraz after his victory at Darband and Shirvan in March 1547 and October 1548, 67–72.
16. Savory, "Alkâs Mîrzâ," 406; Walsh, "The Revolt of Alqâs Mîrzâ," 61–78.
17. Peçevi (Peçuyî) İbrahim Efendi (1574–1649), *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1980), 1:267–72.
18. Monshî, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 1:115.
19. Mehmed Solak-Zâde, *Solak-Zâde Tarihi*, ed. Vahid Çabuk (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı 1989), 2:210–18; Müneccimbaşı Ahmet Dede, *Müneccimbaşı Tarihi*, 2 vols. ed. İsmail Ersünel (Istanbul: Tercüman, n.d.), 2:558–62.
20. Solak-Zâde, *Solak-Zâde Tarihi*, 2:214.
21. Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 1:273.
22. *Ibid.*, 280–81.
23. *Ibid.*, 278–79.
24. *Ibid.*, 279.
25. Solak-Zâde, *Solak-Zâde Tarihi*, 2:216.
26. Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 1:282–83; Solak-Zâde, *Solak-Zâde Tarihi*, 216; Monshî, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 1:122–24. Solak-Zâde does not stress the duplicity of Alqâs Mîrzâ but states the sudden change of heart on the part of Sultan Süleyman.
27. Mohammad Amin Riyâhî, *Sefâratnâmahhâ-yi Iran* (Tehran, 1989), 28.
28. Maria Szuppe, "Kinship Ties between the Safavids and the Qizilbash Amirs in the Late Sixteenth-Century Iran: A Case Study of the Political Career of Members of the Sharaf al-Din Oghli Tekelu Family," in *Safavid Persia*, ed. Charles Melville (London: I. B. Tauris, 1996), 79–104.
29. Monshî, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 1:80–83.
30. *Ibid.*; Solak-Zâde, *Solak-Zâde Tarihi*, 113.
31. *Ibid.*
32. Müneccimbaşı, *Müneccimbaşı Tarihi*, 2:539.
33. Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 1:289–90.
34. Bekir Küttüoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran Siyasi Münasebetleri* (Istanbul: İstanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1962); Fahrettin Kırzioğlu, *Osmanlıların Kafkas-Elleri'ni Fethi (1451–1590)* (Ankara: TTK Basımevi, 1993).
35. Leslie P. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 57–65.
36. Mehmed Zeki Pakalin, *Maktul Şehzadeler* (Istanbul: Şems Matbaası, 1920), 217–33. Süleyman had eight sons of whom four died of natural causes and one daughter, Mihrimah Sultan. Like Bayezid and Selim, Mihrimah Sultan was born to Hürrem and was married to Rüstem Pasha who became the grand vizier and together with Hürrem plotted to eliminate prince Mustafa. *Ibid.*, 222–23.
37. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 65.
38. Pakalin, *Maktul Şehzadeler*, 223–33; Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 79–86. Both Pakalin and Peirce rely on the account of Ottoman historians like Peçevi and Mustafa Âli. Peirce does not fully agree with the conspiracy theory of Ottoman historians and instead attributes this policy to the rising power of the favorite, princess, and *damad* in the capital which consolidated the power of the royal household during the sixteenth century. Peirce, *The Imperial Harem*, 88–90.

39. Şerafettin Turan, "Bayezid, Şehzade," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi* (İstanbul, 1992), 5:230–31.
40. Pakalin, *Maktul Şehzadeler*, 239–40.
41. Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 1:386–87; Solak-Zâde, *Solak-Zâde Tarihi*, 2:264–69. On the patron-client relationship between Mustafa Âli and Lala Mustafa Pasha, see Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire, The Historian Mustafa Âli, 1541–1600* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).
42. Müneccimbaşı, *Müneccimbaşı Tarihi*, 2:579.
43. Ibid., 230. See also the text of the letter written by Bayezid to Süleyman and to Rüstem Pasha, in Şerafettin Turan, *Kanunî'nin Oğlu, Şehzade Bayezid Vak'ası* (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1961), 198–202.
44. For the text of this *fetva*, see Turan, *Kanunî'nin Oğlu*, 202–204.
45. Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 1:393; Solak-Zâde, *Solak-Zâde Tarihi*, 2:265–74; Müneccimbaşı, *Müneccimbaşı Tarihi*, 2:582; Monshî, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 1:166–67. See also the poetry of Bayezid under the pen name Shahî to Süleyman claiming innocence, and Süleyman's response in verse under the pen name Muhibî, in Turan, *Kanunî'nin Oğlu*, 208–10.
46. *3 Numaralı Mühimme Defteri* (Ankara, 1993), 69.
47. Ibid., 129, 130. On the capture of Bayezid's followers, see p. 137. On their resettlement in the fortress of Bursa, see p. 139.
48. Ibid., 151.
49. Monshî, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 1:170–72; Solak-Zâde, *Solak-Zâde Tarihi*, 2:277. Riyahi, *Sefâratnâmabhâ-yi İran*, 29.
50. The text of some of these letters can be found in Ottoman chronicles, Feridun Bey, *Mecumu'a-i Münşeatü's-Selâtin, II* (İstanbul, AH 1275/1858). For an excellent study based on Ottoman sources and the text of some of the letters exchanged between Bayezid and Süleyman, see Şerafettin Turan, *Kanunî'nin Oğlu*. See also, Peçevi, 2:400.
51. Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 2:403–4; Solak-Zâde, *Solak-Zâde Tarihi*, 2:279–84. According to Solak-Zâde, Shah Tahmasb sent several letters to Sultan Süleyman asking him to forgive his son.
52. Solak-Zâde, *Solak-Zâde Tarihi*, 2:283; Solak-Zâde stresses the innocence of Bayezid and the shah's overreaction to dubious charges. But Tahmasb's reaction reflects his own insecurity and profound mistrust of the Ottomans.
53. Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 1:409.
54. Turan, "Bayezid, şehzade," 231; Monshî, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 1:170–72; *The Cambridge History of Iran*, 6:248. Monshî is silent about the gifts received by the shah. Selim II appointed his tutor Lala Mustafa as the grand vizier after his accession to the throne in 1566.
55. Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 1:4089; Solak-Zâde, *Solak-Zâde Tarihi*, 2:289. Riyâhî is also critical of Shah Tahmasb's decision to kill the Ottoman prince.
56. Monshî, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 1:172.
57. Ibid., 2:960–76.
58. See the account of Michelle Membré in A. H. Morton, *Mission to Lord Sophy of Persia (1539–1542)* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1993), 18.
59. Monshî, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 2:964–65.
60. Ibid., 971.
61. Ibid., 1010.
62. Ibid., 1002–4.
63. Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 2:380–91.
64. On the regicide of Osman II, see Gabriel Piterberg, *An Ottoman Tragedy, History, and Historiography at Play* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

65. Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats, The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 223. Peçevi, *Tarih-i Peçevi*, 2:380–91. See also Caroline Finkel, *Osman's Dream, The History of the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 200–208.
66. Monshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, 2:1238–39.
67. *Ibid.*, 2:1235–36.
68. *Ibid.*, 2:1298–99.
69. Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats*, 224–27.
70. Zarinebaf-Shahr, “Qizilbash Heresy and Rebellion,” 9–15.
71. Riyâhî, *Sefaratnamahay-i Iran*, 37–39, Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran Siyasi Münasebetleri*, 115–19. For the text of letters exchanged between Shah Khuda Banda and Murad III see, *Shâhnâme-yi Murad-i Salis*, 29b–35b.
72. *Shâhnâme-yi Murad-i Sâlis*, Revan 200, Istanbul, Topkapı Saray Library, folios 75b–76 a; *Sûrnâme-i Hümayûn*, Hazine 1344, Topkapı Palace Library, folios. 276b–277a. See also, Derin Terzioğlu, “The Imperial Circumcision Festival of 1582: An Interpretation,” *Muqarnas* 12 (1995), 86. I am grateful to Filiz Çağman and Banu Mahir of Topkapı Saray Library in Istanbul for their assistance in providing access to these valuable manuscripts.
73. *Shâhnâme-yi Murad-i Sâlis*, folio 76a.
74. Istanbul, Başbakanlık Archives, Kamil Kepeci, vol. 133, 75. For the eighteenth century see, Fahameddin Başar, *Osmanlı Eyâlet Tevcihati* (1717–1730) (Ankara: TTK, 1997), 152–70.
75. For a good treatment of this topic see, Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaykh, and State*, 161–89.
76. *The Cambridge History of Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 6:327.
77. Başbakanlık Archives (BBA), Istanbul, Cevdet Hariciye, no. 6850.
78. *Ibid.*, no. 955.
79. For a change in Ottoman attitudes toward Iran in the eighteenth century, see Ernest Tucker, “The Peace Negotiation of 1736: A Conceptual Turning Point in Ottoman-Iranian Relations,” *The Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, no. 20 (Spring 1996): 38–56.
80. Zarinebaf-Shahr, “Tabriz under Ottoman Rule,” 23–34; 140–47.
81. *Ibid.*, 23–34.
82. Istanbul, Başbakanlık Archives, Maliyeden Müdevver, vol. 590, 67–72. See also, Rudolph Matthee, “Administrative Stability and Change in Late-17th Century Iran: The Case of Shaykh 'Ali Khan Zanganah (1669–1689),” *IJMES* 26 (1994): 77–98.
83. On Shaykh Ali Khan Zanganah see Matthee “Administrative Stability and Change.”
84. *Ibid.*, 71.
85. For Azerbaijan see, Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, “Tabriz under Ottoman Rule.”
86. BBA, Mühimme Defteri, vol. 144, pp. 47, 48, 67, 69, 70; Tucker, “The Peace Negotiation of 1736,” 24–37.
87. *Ibid.*, 30–34.
88. Riyâhî, *Sefaratnâmahâ-yi Iran*, 49–98.
89. Thierry Zarcone and Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, eds., *Les Iraniens d'Istanbul* (Louvain: Peeters, 1993); Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, “Diaspora (in Ottoman Turkey),” *Encyclopedia Iranica* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1995), 7:374.

CHAPTER 5

FACING A RUDE AND BARBAROUS NEIGHBOR

IRANIAN PERCEPTIONS OF RUSSIA AND THE RUSSIANS FROM THE SAFAVIDS TO THE QAJARS

RUDI MATTHEE

ASK ANY IRANIAN ABOUT THE LAST ONE hundred years of his or her country's history, and the story of Mossadegh and the British-led conspiracy that is believed to have brought him down is likely to top the list, or at least to come up very soon. What is more, and despite the descent of Great Britain to the rank of second-rate power in the wake of World War II, many Iranians, especially those of the older generation, continue to see perfidious British influence behind each and every negative event and development in their country.¹ Rarely, if ever, is Russia's historical role in Iran mentioned in the same manner and with comparable passion.

This is odd. After all, in terms of sheer impact and certainly in terms of military operations, violence, casualties, property damage, and above all, loss of territory inflicted on Iran, there is no comparison between these two countries: Beginning with Tsar Peter's invasion of Talesh and Gilan in 1721, the story of Russia's treatment of Iran is a long, sad tale of brazen political interference, (mostly) unprovoked military invasion, and territorial annexation, much of it accompanied by a great deal of violence. The Russian imperialist thrust gained lasting momentum in the early nineteenth century, when the tsarist regime annexed a vast swath of land comprising Armenia and Georgia that had been held by the Iranians since Safavid times. Russia continued to put considerable pressure on Iran and occasionally engaged in great brutality on Iranian soil. It did so all the way to the time of the events during and immediately following the Second World War, when the Soviet Union, having set up puppet republics in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan, initially refused to honor the agreement to evacuate Iranian territory within six months after the cessation of hostilities.

Nothing the British ever did to Iran and its inhabitants is comparable in intent, method, or effect. Of course, London and Calcutta exerted pressure and sought influence, schemed, bullied, and threatened, and the British were instrumental in Iran's loss of Herat in the mid-nineteenth century—preventing it from falling to the Russians. But they sent armies to the Persian Gulf only twice (in the context of threats to Herat), occupying the isle of Kharg from 1838 to 1842 and carrying out a more extensive expedition on Iranian soil in 1856, which however did not go beyond the port of Bushehr and nearby Borazjun.

Why England is more reviled and looked at with suspicion in Iran than *Rus-e manhus*, ominous Russia, is a complex issue. This essay does not claim to provide a full answer to this question; an investigation of that nature would require a (much-needed) book-length examination of the reverberations of the Russian Revolution of 1917 on Iran and its inhabitants, and especially an elaborate analysis of the reception of Marxism-Leninism and of the development of leftist thought among Iran's urban elite.² It would further necessitate a thorough exploration of the fraught relationship between the Soviet Union and Pahlavi Iran. What follows merely sets out to chart the historical terrain preceding the events of 1917. I will offer some suggestions for an answer to the question about the glaring discrepancy in the Iranian reaction to the British and the Russians, respectively, by looking at the ways Iranians have viewed their northern neighbors over the last two hundred years—based on an admittedly limited array of Persian and non-Persian-language sources. The focus will be on the period beginning with the ascent of the Qajars at the turn of the nineteenth century until the period of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran, 1905 to 1911 and its immediate aftermath.

ANTECEDENTS

Iran and Russia have a long history of interaction involving diplomacy and trade and, since the early eighteenth century, military aggression and invasion. The Safavid period saw intensified interaction between Iranians and Russians, involving commerce as well as diplomacy. Commercial ties had long linked north and south but grew in intensity after 1604, when Shah Abbas I (r. 1587–1629) settled a large number of Armenians from their homeland on the Aras River to his newly created capital Isfahan, where he built a suburb for them and gave them commercial rights. The same ruler became increasingly interested in Muscovy as a growing power, especially after the cessation of the so-called Time of Troubles, the tumultuous period of famine, insurrection, and lawlessness in Russia that ended with the accession of the Romanov Dynasty in 1613. Shah Abbas alone dispatched at least 15 missions to Moscow combining commercial and diplomatic mandates—the latter typically revolving around the issue of respective spheres of influence in the Caucasus and, to a lesser extent, suggestions for joint action against the Ottomans. The Russians reciprocated, sending no fewer than ten missions to the Safavid court in the period between 1598 and 1618, responding to Safavid appeals for military assistance against the Turks and seeking protection for their merchants in northern Iran. Contacts waned under Shah Abbas's successors, who gave up on his efforts to build an anti-Ottoman coalition and retreated from the activist foreign policy animated by these efforts. Within a decade they had made peace with Iran's most redoubtable enemy, the Ottoman Empire, thus obviating the urgency to seek a

military alliance with Christian powers. In keeping with the more inward-looking stance the later Safavid rulers adopted, diplomatic traffic with the outside world including Russia leveled off, though especially the Julfan Armenians continued to conduct a lively commercial exchange between the two countries.³

Despite these contacts, actual information about Russia available to Iranians long remained scattered and influenced by mythology as much as by lived experience. Well into the early modern period the Iranian perception of the country and its inhabitants followed firmly established stereotypes. The Biblical and Qur'anic notion of Gog and Magog, Ya'juj and Ma'juz, the foggy lands to the north inhabited by brutish, dimwitted, and bibulous people and separated from the civilized lands of Islam by a wall supposedly built by Alexander the Great, set the tone for views that proved remarkably tenacious through the ages.⁴

The Safavids, departing from their proverbial hospitality, at times treated even official visitors from Russia accordingly. We have reports about how they received envoys from Moscow in distinctly undiplomatic fashion, even forcing them to dismount before appearing before the shah. In 1664, for instance, the members of a visiting delegation of allegedly drunk Russian delegates had to be pulled off their horses and were made to walk across the royal square in Isfahan carrying their presents.⁵ There were reasons other than pure lack of respect for this particular incident, involving the realization that Russia's real intentions were more ominous than the mandate presented by the members of the mission. Still, the encounter bespeaks contempt for creatures deemed inferior. Such contempt extended to Russian merchants as well. They, too, were frequently maltreated, harassed, and imprisoned in Iran (just as Iranian merchants frequently suffered harsh treatment in Russia).⁶ Like their Western European peers, Iran's elite clearly viewed Russia as a "rude and barbarous kingdom."⁷ The Iranians, the French observer Chardin insisted, looked upon the Russians as the Uzbeks of Europe—filthy, uncultured, and obtuse.⁸

The actual term *Rus-e manhus*, of Russia as an ominous, threatening place, can be traced to the same period. An early written reference occurs in the seventeenth-century Safavid chronicle *Khold-e barin*.⁹ The Russians are mentioned by name—the term used is *tava'efe manhus-e Rus*, sinister Russian groups—although the actual reference is to Cossack raids across the Caspian Sea in the early seventeenth century, a recurring scourge for Russia as much as for Iran, where they frequently ravaged the Caspian littoral, forcing the inhabitants of Gilan and Mazandaran to build defensive towers.¹⁰ This confusion reflects a poorly developed sense of differentiation, and one that only reinforces the notion of a dismissive lack of Iranian interest in the lands north of the Caucasus mountain range. The well-known uprising of Sten'ka Razin, a Cossack rebel, in the 1660s, and its spillover effects into Safavid territory, manifesting itself in similar depredations on the southern and southwestern shores of the Caspian Sea, Talesh, Gilan, and Mazandaran, is of the same order. Iran's authorities probably knew that this aggression, too, was the work of Cossacks, yet they suspected official Russian involvement through incitement.¹¹

Not that the Iranians needed nomadic peoples inhabiting the steppe lands around the Caspian Seas as scapegoats. From the late sixteenth century onward, the Russians themselves had been engaged in a drive to strengthen and extend their control over the northern Caucasus by way of a series of forays, which made them intrude upon lands that the Safavids were in the process of reducing to vassalage or tributary status. In their quest for fiscal income and slaves, the Safavids under

Shah Abbas I had spread their influence and eventually control to Armenia and the eastern, fertile half of Georgia known as Kakheti. Russian pressure on the northern Caucasus came in part in the form of attempts to co-opt the myriad tribal peoples of the Caucasus, in part in response to calls from Georgian princes for protection, either against rival forces or against Iranian or Turkish control.¹² But the country's southward thrust was also about land, commercial links, and economic resources. Continuing for the next three centuries, it extended Moscow's sphere of influence to the Iranian frontline, into Daghestan and as far south as the Terek River, where from the late sixteenth century onwards the Russians were engaged in building up a defensive line against their southern neighbors by constructing a string of forts and garrisons at strategic locations.¹³

Russo-Iranian tensions rarely degenerated into outright warfare in this period. An exception is the skirmishes that occurred in 1652, when a coalition of Safavid tribal forces from Shamakhi and Darband and led by the governor of Shamakhi torched a fortress that the Russians had built on the southern bank of the Terek, driving out its garrisoned troops.¹⁴ Matters turned more ominous in the early eighteenth century, when Peter the Great embarked on a series of expeditions that would extend Russian control into Iranian territory. Tsar Peter sent a first reconnaissance mission to the Safavid state in 1699. In 1711 the same ruler issued a policy decree designed to stimulate trade with Iran. It promised favorable treatment for Iran's Armenians, encouraging them to ply the Russian route and visit Moscow.¹⁵ Five years later, sensing the terminal state of the Safavid polity, Tsar Peter dispatched the diplomat Artemii Petrovich Volynskii as his envoy to Isfahan. Volynskii's mission included the conclusion of a bilateral commercial treaty but was really designed to gather intelligence about Iran, its terrain, resources, infrastructure, and troop strength. In 1722, the tsar's troops attacked with the intent of incorporating Iran's silk-rich Caspian provinces into the Russian realm.¹⁶

The period following the fall of the Safavids in 1722 and the death of Tsar Peter three years later initially saw diminishing Russo-Iranian relations. The Treaties of Rasht (1732) and Ganja (1735) entailed Russia's retreat from all Iranian territories that it had previously occupied. This involved some diplomatic traffic during the reign of Nadir Shah (1736–47), leading to Russia's renunciation of any claims on Iranian territory, but little further official action.¹⁷ Relations continued at the level of trade and fishing, concentrating on places like the southern Caspian Sea port of Anzali, where the Russians remained active.

The official relationship between the two states picked up again under Tsarina Catherine II (r. 1762–96). Two centuries of interaction with the region notwithstanding, the Russians knew very little about the complexities of the Caucasus until Catherine sent the German-born naturalist Johann Anton Gleditsch to explore the region.¹⁸ The empress, already preoccupied with Poland and the Crimea and no doubt mindful of the logistical and environmental difficulties Peter I had encountered during his Caspian campaign, does not seem to have had any territorial designs on Iran, let alone to have been ready for a military attack on India. She was rather motivated by commercial designs, in particular the prospect of energizing the trade route to the subcontinent, when she tried to gain a foothold for her country on the three islands called Ashuradeh that guard the entrance to the lagoon of Astarabad (modern Gorgan) extending from the southeastern tip of the Caspian Sea. To that end, Count Voinovich in 1781 steered a Russian flotilla into the

Bay of Astarabad, intent on getting Agha Mohammad Khan, the region's governor and subsequent founder of the Qajar dynasty, to cede the islands and the port of Astarabad (now called Bandar-e Torkaman) to him. Agha Mohammad, keen to outflank his regional rivals by seeking protection from the Russians, agreed to give up Astarabad and its surroundings and to support the Russians in their various projects, which included plans to build naval and commercial facilities as well as a fortified garrison. Surprisingly, the Russian court did not respond to this offer until six months later, by which time Agha Mohammad Khan's rivals, fearing the kind of external intrusion that might enable him to usurp the throne of Iran, had mounted enough resistance against him to make the plan go awry.¹⁹

A few years later Catherine became involved in intra-Iranian politics when Hedayatollah, the governor of Gilan, sought Russian assistance against his rival Agha Mohammad Khan who threatened to invade his territory. The Russians demanded Anzali as a condition for vassalage; Hedayatollah had no choice but to agree, but, weak as he was, soon saw himself forced to seek refuge with the Russians who promptly delivered him to a rival. A long-term pattern of patron-client relations began to emerge when, in the face of continuing difficulties with Agha Mohammad Khan, Russia chose to support his main rival, 'Ali Morad Khan Zand. The latter was interested in Catherine's support for his territorial ambitions, and would have been willing to cede control over the Caspian and the country's northwest to the Russians in return for their recognition of his claims to the heartland.²⁰ Mustafa Khan, the local ruler of Talesh, who had problems with Agha Mohammad Khan as well, followed a similar policy by soliciting the assistance of the Russians, offering them occupancy of his territory as a form of protection against his main rival.²¹

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

The little available information suggests that, during the entire eighteenth century, Iranians continued to perceive Russia and Russians along two traditional themes: contempt for a people they thought culturally inferior, and fear of the same people because of the truculent and overtly expansionist policies of the Russian state. Following observations by European travelers in the Safavid period, Iranians, or at least the members of the country's elite, felt vastly superior to Russians. The reign of Tsar Peter and the changes it brought to Russia did not go unnoticed among Iran's political elite. His relations with other countries were, if not known in detail, a topic of inquiry for Safavid officials. Artemii Volynskii, visiting Shamakhi in 1718, thus had a conversation with the town's governor, Khosraw Khan, who asked him about the tsar's visit to Holland and the peace Russia had made with Sweden, ending the Northern War.²²

Yet Jonas Hanway, visiting northern Iran in the mid-eighteenth century, was probably right in surmising that most Iranians remained blissfully unaware of the changes taking place to the north. Hanway drew attention to the tendency among Iranians to look down on Russians and put it in the context of a specific type of interaction that was hardly conducive to the formation of a new perspective. "Being ignorant of the vast improvements that are being made by their neighbours the Russians," he insisted, "they [the Iranians] consider themselves in general as greatly superior to them; the truth is, they see very few but their unpolished merchants,

or ruder seamen.”²³ Despite the reforming policies of Peter I, Russia remained associated with backwardness and boorishness rather than with development and progress, and the people of the Caspian littoral continued to live in fear of being plundered by Oğurtsjoi tribesmen and Russian pirates.²⁴

From the time of Peter the Great, the perception of Russia among ordinary Iranians, or at least the ones living in the northern parts of the country, began to change in one important way. The Armenian inhabitants of Iran and the Ottoman Empire had long nurtured an image of Russia as a refuge and a protecting force, fastening their hopes of deliverance from Muslim dominance on Moscow and St. Petersburg. Toward the end of the Safavid period, as insecurity and administrative abuse gripped Iran, Armenians living in northern Iran fled in droves, escaping an increasingly onerous tax regime and attracted by the growing opportunities offered by Peter's mercantile policies.²⁵ So many Armenians from Iran's north decamped to Russia that by 1723 there were said to be none left in Gilan and Mazandaran.²⁶ And Armenians were not the only Iranian subjects looking at Russia as a refuge from domestic misery and oppression at this point. The waning days of Safavid rule saw appeals from the general population for Russian protection against the growing insecurity and tyranny in Iran. The Dutch traveler Cornelis de Bruyn, visiting Shirvan in 1702, called that province one of the most important for the Safavid government and sang its praises as a land of fertility, high agricultural yield, and low prices whose people lived under the firm but just rule of Allah Verdi Khan. The same observer lauded Ganja, an urban center on par with Shamakhi (Shamakha), as one of Iran's best cities, endowed as it was with wide streets, neat bazaars, pretty caravanserais, and a “noble” market.²⁷ In 1707 De Bruyn returned to find conditions changed. The government was now in the hands of Allah Verdi Khan's son, a ruler who was mostly concerned with women and wine. Justice and security had suffered. Troops stationed in the region were not paid and lived from plunder. The Dutch traveler met local people who told him that they would not mind if the Russian tsar were to invade and that, in fact, they would prefer to live under Russian rule.²⁸ In the subsequent period, which only saw an increase in lawlessness in Iran, one hears of similar sentiments, even though these were not necessarily directed against Iranian misrule. In 1722, for instance the inhabitants of Baku are said to have requested the tsar's protection against the oppression of the Lezghis, who had “vexed them with inroads for two years.”²⁹ The German-Russian traveler Gmelin in the 1770s reports how the population of Darband, weary of the crushing taxes the local khan imposed on them in order to maintain a credible defense against his neighbors, longed for the days when the Russians had been in control of the area.³⁰

Peter the Great would become a model and his accomplishments a template for nineteenth-century Iranian reformers. To 'Abbas Mirza, son of Fath 'Ali Shah, governor of Tabriz and Iran's first official modernizer, the Russians were bitter foes, but he held Peter in esteem as a great reformer and innovator.³¹ Half a century later Naser al-Din Shah, too, admired Tsar Peter as the ruler who had taken it upon himself to turn a backward country into a mighty empire. Similarly, it is no accident that Voltaire's history of Peter the Great was among the first books translated into Persian in the nineteenth century.³²

Peter was not the only ruler to make a lasting impression on Iranians. The record about their reception of Russia's reform and material progress for the remainder of the eighteenth century is spotty for lack of good Persian-language documentation,

but it appears that the reign of Catherine II especially cast quite a spell on Iran. The fact that she inflicted a series of humiliating defeats on the Ottomans and expanded Russia's territory by some five hundred thousand square kilometers would have been enough to inspire awe in any observer. But what made these feats truly remarkable is her gender. The formidable reputation of *Khorshid kolah* (sun-crowned), as Catherine was called in Iran, famously prompted Mirza Mohammad, the *kalantar* of Fars under Karim Khan Zand, to lament that, at the time of his writing, Iran had become bereft of (real) men, and to express the hope that a woman of the stature of Catherine would come to power in his country.³³

Sir John Malcolm, who in 1800 visited Tehran as the first British envoy to the newly established Qajar regime, reports how her fame had spread among its people: "The reputation of Catherine had spread to every quarter of the East. The inhabitants of Persia had heard, from the merchants who travelled over Russia, the most exaggerated accounts of the wisdom of her internal administration, and the success of her foreign wars. The admiration which her conduct excited was increased by the consideration of her sex. To a nation, among whom females are only esteemed as the slaves of pleasure, it is almost an inexplicable wonder to see a woman ruling a great empire with more than the genius of a man."³⁴ The portrayal of Catherine by Rostam al-Hokama, the well-known early nineteenth-century man of letters, vividly illustrates Malcolm's words. In his *Rostam al-Tavarikh*, he narrates an allegorical story about Shah Tahmasb II (r. 1729–33), who briefly ruled Iran following the collapse of the Safavids and who became widely known for his love of "lust and play" and Catherine, presenting their relationship as a variant on the doomed love between Yusof and Zoleykha or Khosraw and Shirin. The story portrays Tahmasb as a ruler of incomparable beauty whose portrait is sent to Catherine, ruler of Russia, the shadow of God, a woman of extraordinary beauty and grace ruling over her realm with absolute justice and independence. Having received the painting, she falls in love with the image yet cruel fate and confusion prevent her burning love from being realized.³⁵

RUSSIAN EXPANSIONISM

At the turn of the nineteenth century Russo-Iranian relations changed dramatically. Iranian imperialism in the Caucasus, suspended after the fall of the Safavids but revived by Nadir Shah, came to an end, to be supplanted by Russian expansionism into a region that had been under either direct Iranian control or tributary to Iranian rulers since the late sixteenth century. Especially Georgia, its elite assimilating with the Russian establishment and leery of Muslim domination, steadily moved into Russia's orbit, to the point where in 1783 its ruler, Erekle II (r. 1747–98), formally agreed to Russian vassalage. Twelve years later, Agha Mohammad Khan, taking advantage of Russia's preoccupation elsewhere, invaded Georgia and sacked Tiflis. In response, and encouraged by King Erekle, Catherine sent an army to the Caucasus, presenting the invasion as a war of liberation. This was a prelude to the incorporation of Georgia into the Russian realm, which occurred in 1801, presaging yet more war with the Iranians. The Russians defeated the Qajar armies in 1804, in 1812 at Aslanduz, and again in 1827, when they took Yerevan and marched into Tabriz, forcing the Qajars to sue for peace. The rout was total and as humiliating as the treaties that they imposed on Tehran in the wake of their

victories. The main Russian commander, General Tsitsianov, of Georgian origin, contemptuous of Muslims and eager to fight, became associated with the brutality of the war, earning the epithet “shedder of blood” (*saffak*, who spilled the “blood of innocent people like a flood”) from historiographer Reza Qoli Khan Hedayat. Years after the events, Tsitsianov’s name would be “repeated as something dreadful, when the Persians wish to frighten their children.”³⁶ Both the Treaty of Golestan of 1813 and the Treaty of Torkmenchay of 1828 entailed the loss of Iranian sovereignty over large swaths of fertile land in the Caucasus. The former treaty also gave the Russians the exclusive right to maintain a naval presence on the Caspian Sea and laid the groundwork for a determining Russian voice in Iran’s subsequent royal succession. The latter accord further obliged the Qajars to pay the Russians a crippling sum in indemnification.

These victories, combined with an existing Russian view of Iranians marked by the same type of contempt for Iranians as fanatical barbarians that the Iranians felt for their northern neighbors, explains the swaggering attitude Russian military officials and diplomats displayed following the first war.³⁷ The high-handed demeanor of General Yermolov when he came to Tabriz in 1817 to meet ‘Abbas Mirza, was deliberate, designed to bully people he thought would only heed force. The members of his delegation naturally rode in on horseback. As if to avenge the humiliation of 1664, they also refused to take off their boots and to put on the “customary red stockings” upon entering the princely chambers.³⁸

The outbreak of the second war was the result of various factors. One was ‘Abbas Mirza’s burning desire to take revenge for Iran’s defeat in the first war. Flush with a fresh victory against the Ottomans and overestimating his country’s military power, especially following a series British-led reforms of his military forces, he overestimated the strength of the Iranian army. The death of Tsar Alexander in 1825 and the subsequent Decembrist uprising also led the Iranians to believe that a civil war had broken out in the north and that the tribes in the Caucasus had erupted in revolt against Russian rule.³⁹ Religious fervor played an important role as well in the frenzy leading up to especially the second war. As early as 1810 Russia’s aggression and the violation of Iranian soil had prompted Iran’s Shi’i clerics to call for jihad against the infidels, portraying this as an expression of the will of the people and declaring anyone who refused to endorse the religious imperative to march against the Russians an apostate and a follower of Satan. In 1825, the call became so loud and insistent that the Qajar elite had to respond to it. This included Fath ‘Ali Shah himself who was otherwise inclined to conclude a peace treaty with the Russians. ‘Abbas Mirza is said to have had a hand in whipping up anti-Russian sentiments among the *ulama*. This incitement had little to do with personal religious conviction; the crown prince was rather motivated by the rivalry that existed between him and his brothers as well as by concerns about his religious credibility in the face of clerical suspicion with regard to his western-inspired reforms.⁴⁰ The effect, in turn, was less the mobilization of hordes of volunteers ready to sacrifice themselves than the outpouring of pamphlets that portrayed Russia and its people along traditional lines, only in a more lurid light than ever. The jihad literature from this time includes the *Ahkam al-Jihad wa Asbab al-Rashad*, which was probably edited around 1813 but remained unpublished until modern times, and the *Jehadiyeh*, which was printed in Tabriz in 1819 under the auspices of ‘Abbas Mirza. Both were edited by Mirza Mohammad ‘Isa Farahani (Qa’em Maqam), ‘Abbas Mirza’s first

chief minister (who was said to have hated the Russians⁴¹), and contain texts by various *mojtaheds*.⁴²

These tracts pair a traditional Shi'i disdain for unbelievers to long-standing Iranian loathing for Russian religious habits and customs, as reflected in the terms that appear in them and that Iranians used for Russians at the time, such as "Moscow dogs" and "pork-eaters." Negative sentiments, exacerbated by stories about Russian brutality, which included the widespread rape of women, the killing of children, the destruction of mosques, and the wholesale burning of Muslim villages, were also officially mobilized as a propaganda tool during these wars. Mirza Bozorg Farahani calls the Russians weak and erring in their religious beliefs and connects this to what he sees as their debauched moral ways. He calls attention to their depraved gender relations and the objectionable demeanor of women who mingled with unrelated men not just to dance and sing together but to fornicate in promiscuous ways to the point where, in the author's words, they did not even observe the limits observed by wild animals. Nor was this type of behavior confined to the Russians, according to Mirza Bozorg. The worst aspect of it all, he concludes, is that neighboring Muslim peoples had become infected by these ugly habits.⁴³

The image of boorishness and especially the shocking lack of Russian hygiene remained a prevalent theme in Iranian perceptions of their northern neighbors. Mirza Abu'l Hasan Shirazi, the secretary of the Qajar embassy that visited Russia in 1814 in the aftermath of Russia's defeat of Iran and the ensuing Treaty of Golestan, is quite explicit about this in his travelogue. He castigates the Russians for their foul habits and for their lack of physical cleanliness (*taharat*). Speaking as a Shi'i Muslim, he also calls them ritually unclean (*najes*). He takes them to task for urinating while standing up and against walls even in public, for using paper rather than water to wipe themselves, and for being sparing in their use of water in general. In their bathrooms, he sneers, one looks in vain for an *aftabeh*, the water jug that to this day is an obligatory attribute of the traditional Iranian lavatory. He similarly refers to unsanitary female customs regarding menstruation.⁴⁴

The outcome of the second Russo-Iranian war clearly instilled fear and hatred of the Russians in many Iranians. The French engineer Camille Trézel, who made a study of Gilan and Mazandaran as part of the mission of General Claude Mathieu de Gardane (1807–9), insisted that the population of these Caspian provinces had a much greater antipathy for the Russians than the people of Fars had for the Arabs or even the Turks.⁴⁵ T. B. Armstrong, traveling in northern Iran from 1828 to 1829, records how he and his men were taken for Russians and encountered negative reactions twice, first in the bazaar of Zanzan and later around Khoy in Azerbaijan.⁴⁶ Yet the new Russian militarism appears to have caused a shift in perceptions as well. This took different forms, ranging from acquiescence and accommodation to awe and even admiration. 'Abbas Mirza had many Russian soldiers in his service and is said to have licensed a wine shop in Tabriz for their use.⁴⁷ Resignation about Russia's overwhelming power is a sentiment articulated by Qa'em Maqam in his reaction to the outcome of the second war, with reference to the turn of the wheel of fortune. If the justification was thoroughly traditional, the underlying motivation was not. Disappointed by the jihad and disillusioned by the callousness of the clergy, who had advocated religiously inspired resistance yet had welcomed the Russians into Tabriz in 1827, as well as by the recklessness of the warmongering Qajar establishment, a realistic reflection on imperial aggression and its motivating forces

prompted him to advocate negotiation and peace on the basis of the “expediency of the country.”⁴⁸

A similar sense of resignation about the power of the Russians comes through in the early nineteenth-century chronicles. A good example is the *Zu'l Qarneyn*, which covers the first decades of the Qajar Dynasty (AH 1212–50/1797–1835). Its author, Mirza Fazl Allah Shirazi, uses epithets like *bi-iman*, *manhus*, *bad-bonyad*, and *binam o nang* for the Russians. Reserving the terms *bad-gowhar*, *mal'un*, *bad-akhtar*, and *ru-siyah* for the dreaded Tsitsianov, Shirazi offers a poem that celebrates the general's murder near Baku in early 1806.⁴⁹ In the course of his narrative, the author is distinctly less sympathetic to Russia's envoys than to British emissaries like Sir John Malcolm, Sir Harford Jones, and Sir Gore Ouseley who visited Iran in this same period. And he is particularly scornful of Alexander Sergeevich Griboedov, the hapless Russian envoy who in 1829 was murdered by the Tehran mob on rumors that he and his men had forcibly removed Armenian women who had converted to Islam from their harems and taken them to the Russian mission. He calls Griboedov a snapping dog (*kalb-e 'aqur*) who, unaware of the religious zeal of the Iranians, foolishly violated all cultural norms with this unprecedented crime, thus inviting the wrath of the *ulama*.⁵⁰ Yet, overall, Shirazi presents a rather factual overview of the Russo-Iranian interaction in this eventful period and in the process even offers some valuable background information about Russia's ruling elite, including a brief reference to the events of 1825.⁵¹

Shirazi characterized the Russians as proud, fearless, and courageous, suggesting a measure of respect.⁵² The German traveler Moritz Wagner, visiting Tabriz in the 1840s, corroborates the formation of a different view involving a new-found respect for foreigners, reflected in modified relations between Muslims and Christians. The last Russian campaign, he claimed, appeared to have wrought a great change in the demeanor of the Iranian people (inhabiting the north). Whereas previously, a “European could scarcely have ventured alone, in his national costume, and armed, among the groups of the bazaar,” the “European infidel” was now “more respected than the faithful Asiatic in this part of Persia.” This state of affairs, Wagner insisted, “had resulted from the victorious sword of Paskiewitsch, who broke the pride of the Persians.”⁵³ Robert Binning, whose observations date from the mid-nineteenth century, more charitably put it this way: “The Persians profess to hate the Russians, and very likely do so; as they detest, more or less, every Christian nation; but, at the same time, they have learned to respect and dread the power, which they outwardly affect to despise.”⁵⁴ Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart in 1836 called Mohammad Shah Qajar “smitten with his northern ally,” adding that “His Majesty” could do “nothing but talk about the power and the greatness of the Emperor, and of the immense extent of his dominions.”⁵⁵

Beyond the dread and awe of Russia's military might, one detects admiration as well, admiration for the organizational skills that the Russians ended up displaying—after an initially chaotic invasion that spelled hardship for the Russian soldiers, mostly peasants drafted for up to 25 years, who deserted to Iran in large numbers, to be welcomed into the ranks of 'Abbas Mirza's army.⁵⁶ Much of this was already prefigured in the reactions to the muscular policies of Peter I and Catherine II. Yet the *nezam*, or order, the Russians subsequently brought may have made the greatest impression on Iranians, just as, to this day, Middle Easterners often sum up their perception of the presumed advantages of life in the West—and the ultimate

secret of its success—as being a matter of *nezam*. The notion might seem cruelly antithetical to the savage practices of the Russian army, but as the invasion turned into occupation, Russian military discipline, which contrasted so markedly with the tribal disarray, the lack of overall command, and the propensity to loot at random of the Qajar military, and the general orderliness of their occupation elicited grudging admiration among Iranians, who appreciated the fact that at least General Paskevich's troops paid for the goods they bought, on time, and in hard cash.⁵⁷

The old—and related—theme of Iranians looking toward Russia as a place better run than their own resurfaced accordingly. Johnson, traveling through Astara in Talesh in 1817, noted that half of the town was in ruins. The reason, he explained, was that the inhabitants had joined or assisted the Russians during their recent siege of the city and that when the Russian army had withdrawn to Tiflis, many of the townsmen accompanied them, choosing to live on Russian soil. The Qajar troops, in turn, had taken revenge by destroying much of the town and plundering and laying waste “their own frontier.”⁵⁸ The perception that Russian rule might be better than Qajar dominance even seems to have played a role in the fall of Tabriz to the Russians in 1827. The city, reinforced and well guarded, would have withstood a Russian siege but fell because among the local population the hatred of Qajar misrule in the form of Allahyar Khan's governorship outweighed any revulsion they may have felt for the northern infidels. Ironically, they were led in this by the clergy and in particular by the Tabrizi *mojtahed* and prayer leader Mir Fattah, who “seduced the inhabitants of Tabriz to obey the Russians and on the pulpit raised his voice offering prayers for the prosperity of the Russian emperor.” The mob revolted, the gates were opened, and General Paskevich was welcomed with a shower of flowers.⁵⁹

In subsequent years, many people from the northern parts of Iran chose to leave to settle, either temporarily or permanently, on Russian soil. The channels are poorly documented, but trade clearly had an important part in this traffic. A crucial role in this was played by the famous Makaryev fair at Nizhni Novgorod, which was held there since 1817. In the 1830s Iranians began to frequent this annual event, where by one estimate from the 1870s, some two hundred thousand merchants from all over Europe and Asia would congregate.⁶⁰ By the 1880s, the Iranians had become the largest group of Asian merchants visiting the fair.⁶¹

At that time many Iranian subjects had also settled across the border in considerable numbers. By 1860 some fifty thousand Iranians are said to have lived in the southern Caucasus region.⁶² In subsequent decades this number went up, to reach a total of two hundred thousand by 1911. In the 1890s some thirty thousand Iranians annually crossed Iran's border at Jolfa. The number of entry passes given to Iranians intent on visiting the Caucasus saw a steep rise until the early years of the twentieth century.⁶³

There was a political aspect to this migration, having to do with a desire for political freedom on the part of people who chafed under Qajar despotism. Yet it was mostly a matter of economics, of desperately poor people moving to a relatively prosperous and expanding land, in search of a better life. The Russians indeed took measures to encourage agriculture and trade in the territory that fell to them. Under their auspices Tiflis in the 1820s turned from a “mean and dismal-looking town” into a “cheerful, bustling city.”⁶⁴ This was a deliberate strategy, as suggested by a two-year tax exemption proclaimed by the Russians, a measure designed to

tempt Iran's Christian population, suffering under discriminatory conditions and the obligation to pay the poll tax, into moving to Russian-held territory.⁶⁵ The success of this policy is reflected in the fact that in the year 1820 alone, some ten thousand Iranian families apparently crossed the border, lured by the prospect of homes and lands being assigned to them. Not just Armenians and Nestorians heeded this call, but many Muslims, tired of famine and unemployment, crossed over into Russian-administered territory as well. Never mind that, following the Peace Treaty of Torkmenchay of 1828, many returned cursing the Russians and especially General Paskevich for making false promises and not delivering on them.⁶⁶ Even if conditions in the Russian-controlled Caucasus proved to be less than ideal, the northward migration was to continue well into the twentieth century.⁶⁷ A deteriorating economy lacking employment opportunities, famine, fiscal oppression and, for Christians, frequent Kurdish looting of their villages, would prompt Iranians by the tens of thousands to cross the border into the Russian-controlled Caucasus in search of a better life.⁶⁸ In Khorasan, the lure of Russia was also related to security issues involving the age-old problem of Turkmen slave raiding into Iranian territory. The inhabitants of Khorasan apparently appreciated the Russians for defending them against the Turkmen predators.⁶⁹ The Qajar authorities, meanwhile, seeking protection against this scourge, in 1838 called in Russian naval assistance. Shortly thereafter, they allowed Russians to occupy the islands of Ashuradeh and to use those as a naval station from which to combat Turkmen pirates, inaugurating a contested Russian presence in the area that was to last into the early twentieth century.⁷⁰

THE INTENSIFICATION OF CONTACTS THROUGH TRAVEL

In the course of the nineteenth century, the level of interaction between Iran and Europe through travel dramatically increased. As a result a new type of impression came to be recorded in the form of the Iranian travelogue, a genre that was to proliferate in the later part of the nineteenth century. Most Qajar travel narratives recount journeys to Western Europe undertaken for the sake of diplomacy and study and, later, ennobling pleasure. The number of Iranians who visited Russia for these purposes was relatively small, although their journeys generated some interesting accounts. They are novel in that they no longer view the Russians as unclean infidels beyond redemption but as people who were moving up the ladder of progress and development. Nor do those who recorded their impressions voice much animosity with regard to the utter contempt and great brutality the Russians had displayed during their recently military operations in Iran. Their accounts stand out for the factual information they offer as well as for their rather dispassionate tone and tenor. Neither the traditional loathing of the infidel, nor the later outrage about imperialism and, with regard to the collaborators, betrayal, is noticeable in the narration.⁷¹ A case in point, and probably the first narrative evincing this attitude, is the travel account of the well-known Mirza Saleh Shirazi, the first of the Iranian students sent to Europe to pursue higher education in 1815. In the typical fashion of the time, he traveled through Russia on his way to England, visiting Moscow and St. Petersburg on the way. He describes both cities in straightforward terms, paying attention to novelties such as newspapers, military hospitals and lunatic asylums, factories, and medical laboratories.⁷²

Such straightforwardness remained a feature of the travelogues written by Iranians throughout the nineteenth century. This reflects the fascination that Russia retained for visitors from Iran, who may have become more interested in their northern neighbor precisely because it had proven to a formidable military power. Russia's material achievements in particular caught the eye of visitors. Shirazi "Ilchi" visited several factories in Tulna—famous as a center of samovar manufacturing—and Moscow as well as the mint of St. Petersburg. In 1830 Fath 'Ali Shah sent Prince Khosraw Mirza on a mission to St. Petersburg to apologize for the murder of Alexander Griboedov a year earlier. Its members similarly made the rounds of the symbols of Russian modernity: factories; private, public, and military schools; an arsenal; an observatory; and, again, the imperial mint. The author of the travelogue that describes the yearlong voyage, Mirza Mostafa Afshar, referring to Russia's development since the reign of Peter I, sums up his impression of the Russians as follows: "A group of people (*ta'efeh*) who used to be like savages and wild animals, *vohush-o-baha'em*, in a matter of some 120 years have mastered all the arts and sciences, and a state which was perpetually unstable has found lasting order and stability, and every day shows progress and improvement." What is more, unlike Mirza Shirazi, Mirza Mostafa Afshar uses his impressions to criticize conditions in his own country, expressing regret that Iranians could see the progress and orderliness that their northern neighbors had experienced in a very short time with their own eyes, yet did not give any thought to the notion that they, too, could benefit from this progress and thus always be victorious over their neighbors. Visiting the University of St. Petersburg, he complained that his countrymen had hitherto neglected to introduce wonders of the modern world such as steamships to Iran.⁷³ The commander-in-chief of Iran's armed forces, the Amir Nezam, a son of Fath 'Ali Shah who also served as governor of Tabriz, accompanied the suite as well. He did not write about the experience, but Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart, who met him in 1835, claimed that this scion of the shah had "imbibed too high an opinion of Russian greatness during his mission to St. Petersburg with Khoosroo Meerza." Invited to dinner by the Amir Nezam, Stuart observed that all his host's furniture and dinner service were Russian and that miniature paintings of the Russian emperor and empress were conspicuously displayed at his house.⁷⁴ The official who acted as the embassy's scribe, Mirza Taqi Khan, the later Amir Kabir, regrettably did not leave any written impressions of his visit either, but much of what he observed in Russia clearly shows up in the reform program that he set out to implement two decades later when he became Naser al-Din Shah's chief minister.⁷⁵

POLITICAL ISSUES

The final issue to be considered concerns Iranian views of Russia's form of government. Iranian travelers in the Qajar period were clearly impressed with the technological progress the Russians had made since the early eighteenth century. But this did not translate into much interest in and admiration for their neighbors' political system. Mirza Mostafa Afshar, for instance, does not even show any awareness of the Decembrist Revolt of 1825, the failed attempt by bureaucrats and intellectuals to introduce a constitutional monarchy in Russia that had occurred just four years before his visit (and that had prompted Fath 'Ali Shah and 'Abbas Mirza, eager to take advantage of the turmoil and perceived weakness in Russia, to violate

the Russo-Persian agreement of 1813 by crossing the Aras River with troops). One also looks in vain for a serious analysis of Russia's governmental system in his and other travelogues—or in the early Qajar chronicles, for that matter. This is perhaps in part because, to the superficial eye, Russia's political system looked quite similar to that of Iran. The only point of divergence discussed by Afshar concerns the reasons why the Russian political tradition had generated a stable, enduring ruling house—the Romanovs, who had been in power since 1613—whereas Iran had suffered through an unending sequence of ephemeral dynasties and warlords, with disastrous consequences for the country's stability and progress.

As Fereyduun Adamiyat points out, given the thoroughly traditional approach to political philosophy the author applied to the issue, steeped as he and his contemporaries were in writings such as Nezam al-Molk's *Siyasatnameh*, it is only natural that the differences he detected between one form of autocracy and another did not stir his imagination. People like Mirza Mostafa Afshar were keen to enhance their own nation's power and saw encouraging reform as a way to do this, yet Russia could only serve as a beacon in terms of its material accomplishments.⁷⁶ What is more, even if a favorable assessment was hardly something to be aired in public, the governing elite of Qajar Iran must have found Russia's political system attractive, a model to emulate precisely because it had remained autocratic while undergoing waves of infrastructural and technological reform. 'Abbas Mirza for one is said to have approved of Russia's style of governing for its ability to address foreign policy issues without the cumbersome intervention of a parliament or public opinion.⁷⁷

For reformers, by contrast, Russia's autocratic system could never have generated the kind of enthusiasm that prompted contemporary travelers to write glowing reports about England and, to a lesser extent, about other Western European states experimenting with liberal forms of governance at the time. The Russians might portray themselves as a liberating force, both vis-à-vis the Christian population of the Caucasus, which as they saw it had long suffered under the "Muslim yoke," and with regard to Muslims themselves, whom they considered to be oppressed by their own "backward" regimes. Yet they were hardly credible in their claims and pretensions of being a civilized, enlightened people on par with the western Europeans. Any progress coming out of Russia was material in nature and even gestures such as the freeing of serfs in the 1860s were easily overshadowed by the country's imperialist designs and methods, as exemplified in its definitive annexation of Iran's northwestern provinces. Iranians might admire Russia, but they had few illusions about it. Most visited the country in transit; a few went to Moscow or St. Petersburg to study. One example is Mirza Asadollah, who was sent to St. Petersburg to study printing techniques and who came back to Tabriz to set up Iran's first lithograph press; another is Mirza Ja'far, who from 1824 to 1825 went to Moscow to learn about lithography. During the vizierate of Amir Kabir a handful of students were also sent north to study crystal making and sugar refining.⁷⁸ And in late Qajar times several Iranian military officers received their training in Russia. But none of this spawned a debate on politics and the rule of law similar to what was generated by Mirza Saleh Shirazi and the many after him who went to London and Paris for educational purposes. Realism prevailed in the Iranian perception of Russia. People suffering under Qajar rule might speak out in favor of tsarist rule and many continued to move there in search of economic opportunity and safety

from the extortionate arbitrariness of Qajar officialdom, but for those reformers who desired more than material progress the land of the tsar was a poor role model.

The early twentieth century added several additional layers of complexity to the Iranian interaction with, and perceptions of, Russia. Part of this came in the form of a growing influence of Russian social-democratic ideas on educated Iranians, transmitted by those who worked in the oil fields of Baku.⁷⁹ These ideas had a substantial effect on the outcome of Iran's Constitutional Revolution and, by extension, on the subsequent history of Iranian progressive leftist thinking.⁸⁰ The same is true for the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, when the Japanese destroyed Russia's fleet and with that much of her luster as a modern self-confident nation with a strong military. Iranians are said—in a Russian newspaper, no less—to have “breathed a sigh of relief,” at the news, sensing that the defeat had averted their country's definitive absorption into the Russian realm.⁸¹ “Whenever a Russian now blusters,” the British consul in Rahst wrote in late 1904, “he is told to go to Manchuria.”⁸² Indeed, Russia's defeat was celebrated in Iran to the point of provoking such irritation among Russian officials that Iran had to send a mollifying mission to St. Petersburg.⁸³ Meanwhile, Japan temporarily became the darling of reformist circles in Iran, as it did in the wider Asian world, where the humiliation suffered by a major European power at the hands of a nonwhite Asian state bolstered nationalists in their arguments by overturning widely held ideas about the inherent backwardness of Oriental culture.⁸⁴ In Iran, Russia's defeat contributed to a political awakening, a “new restlessness” and a “new impatience” with their “bad government,” as the British put it, all of which would soon manifest itself in the form of a new nationalist spirit during the constitutional movement.⁸⁵

St. Petersburg's increasingly heavy-handed meddling in Iran's internal affairs, meanwhile—with its overtones of taking the humiliation of defeat by the Japanese out on a weaker power⁸⁶—created growing feelings of bitterness toward Russia among Iranians. The Iranian press began to voice ever stronger reservations about the imperialist character of Russia's economic encroachment, focusing on the many concessions that the tsarist regime managed to win from the Qajar state. This theme is also reflected in literature such as Zeyn al-'Abedin Maragheh's *Siyahatnameh-ye Ebrahim Beg*.⁸⁷ But the greatest source of resentment was the political pressure that Russia (and Great Britain) continued to put on Iran. In the Russian case this was exacerbated by the growing conviction among progressive and liberal forces that the new shah, Mohammad 'Ali (r. 1907–9), schemed against the newly instituted parliament at the behest of the Russians. In 1907, the interception of a Russian arms shipment destined for the shah and the ensuing confrontation raised the popular ire to the point where a boycott of Russian goods was threatened.⁸⁸ If one had to pick a defining moment in terms of changing Iranian perceptions of both the Russians and the English, it is August 31 of the same year, the date of their infamous secret agreement that divided Iran into two spheres of influence. Political anxieties quickly supplanted economic concerns, as the Iranian press evinced a “violent attitude” vis-à-vis the two powers, in the words of the British.⁸⁹ Newspapers ranging from *Habl al-Matin*, published in Calcutta, to provincial ones in Azerbaijan, representing Russia as a tiger or an elephant, now began to criticize especially the Russians overtly for their aggressive policies vis-à-vis the Qajar state.⁹⁰ The next few years would further reinforce this negative image and increase the volume of warnings about Russia's designs on Iran. Matters turned dramatic when in April 1909

Russian troops advanced on Tabriz, then encircled by royalist, anticonstitutional forces, with the intent of lifting the siege. Having achieved this, they entered the city and brought relief to a starving population. They were initially welcomed by the populace, including the members of the constitutionalist forces who had been holed up in the city. Yet the favorable reception changed as the liberators turned into an occupying force engaged in bullying, harassment of women and disorderly behavior.⁹¹ Later that year newly established newspapers such as the liberal *Iran-e Naw*, whose editor, Rasulzadeh, himself a Russian, was known for his anti-Russian writings, and *Sharq*, which was edited by Sayyed Ziya al-Din Tabataba'i, published a number of negative articles about Russia.⁹² As German sources report it, this stance made these publications very popular with a public that was growing ever more wary of the Russia's intentions. The following year Russia's persistently brazen behavior also drew sharp criticism from political leaders such as Sardar As'ad, the Bakhtiari leader whose tribal forces captured Tehran in 1909.⁹³ German ambassador Albert Quadt-Wyckradt-Isny, writing from Tehran, commented on the events in Tabriz unfolding that same year by asserting that Iranian nationalists had known all along that Russia was far superior to Iran in terms of land mass, population, and power. Yet, despite Russian defeats in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War, they had always kept a certain respect for the training, the discipline, and the equipment of the Russian soldier. This image, he concluded, was precisely what the Russians had now destroyed with their slovenly appearance, their heavy drinking, and other types of unbecoming behavior.⁹⁴

When Russian troops invaded Azerbaijan in 1911 a large section of the rural population, exhausted by Kurdish marauding and grinding poverty, is said to have welcomed them as liberators. But as the invasion turned into an occupation leading to harassment, arrests, searches, and hangings, this soon changed.⁹⁵ And when the Russians took Tabriz again the following winter, conflict erupted almost immediately. This time the occupiers behaved with particular savagery toward the city's population, allowing their point man, the dreadful Shoja' al-Dowleh (Samad Khan), to execute numerous people, including religious leaders, in the most barbaric fashion.⁹⁶ Stories of these horrors quickly spread among the populace, and photos of mangled corpses went from hand to hand. According to German diplomats, it was these stories and images, in addition to the just published book by Morgan Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia*, which incited the people of Iran against the Russians in unprecedented ways. The pictures, the stories, and the writings all combined to indict the Russians by declaring them directly responsible for the brutality, including the killing of hundreds of noncombatants, among them women and children, and the execution of a number of high-ranking clerics, including the Seqqat al-Islam, the city's Shaykh al-Islam.⁹⁷ Their reputation for savagery and wanton disrespect for Iranian customs and (religious) sensibilities only soared in 1912. In what was by all accounts a premeditated act, the Russian army that year attacked and bombed the shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad, killing a number of pilgrims and causing great material destruction. Naturally, this event caused great anger and hatred among the local population, prompting an outpouring of poems lamenting the assault. As Benjamin Burges Moore, who visited Mashhad less than two years after the outrage, put it, "The bombardment of the shrine has caused the Russians to be cordially hated; and neither it nor the hanging of the *mullās* at Tabriz, will ever be forgiven by Persians." The event resonated far beyond Iran,

causing *Habl al-Matin* to write about it in bitter accusatory tones and generating numerous telegrams from outraged Muslims in India.⁹⁸ Nor was it quickly forgotten. In 1927, a full 15 years afterward, a *Mosibatnameh* was published containing poems in which the evens were recounted.⁹⁹

CONCLUSION

The traditional Iranian image of Russia and its inhabitants is rooted in disdain and condescension, combining a traditional Shi'i rejection of infidels as *najes*, unclean, and an older, supercilious prejudice vis-à-vis people from the foggy north as primitive, backward, and given to heavy drinking that was shared by the larger Islamic world. Russia's negative image in Iran and Islam goes back far in time and, in the Safavid period, was probably aggravated by the fact that Iranians did not necessarily differentiate between Russians and Cossacks and saw little more of proper Russians than uncouth soldiers and illiterate fishermen. The way Russia appeared and behaved in its interaction with the Safavid state, from bedraggled missions representing an obviously poor state in the early 1600s to Tsar Peter's aggressive policies vis-à-vis Iran a century later, only reinforced the image. A creeping awareness in the waning decades of the Safavid state that Russia was better governed than Iran and certainly offered a more hospitable environment for Christians set the tone for a counterperception, though, prompting some people in northern Iran to wish for Russian control and, in the case of the Armenians, even to migrate to the north in some numbers.

Beginning with Tsar Peter's comprehensive modernization project, the eighteenth century brought rapid change to Russia. Given the limited interaction between the two nations in the immediate aftermath of the fall of the Safavids in the early part of the century, the full import of this change took long to register in Iran. Yet the "new" Russia, led by Peter I and Catherine II, had little effect on the country's actual behavior toward Iran and the larger Islamic world, which, if anything, worsened. Whereas under Catherine Russia refrained from mounting a direct attack on Iran, in the early nineteenth century the tsarist state resumed the southward drive that it had begun in the 1550s, now turning it into a blatantly imperialist expansionism. The result was war, humiliating defeat for the Qajars, and a loss of considerable territory for Iran.

The Iranian reaction to these developments was mixed. The old disdain for the crude northerners persisted, but it was now overlaid with fear and loathing felt for an expansionist state whose generals treated the Iranian people with the same contempt and condescension that Iranians had long reserved for Russians. This latter sentiment, in turn, came to be diluted by a new sense of respect and awe, even grudging admiration—for the technological prowess of a nation whose backwardness was part of living memory, and more urgently, for the very same military strength that instilled fear. The reaction was thus a mix of bravado and pragmatism. Iran's politicians, even after the first humiliating defeat, continued to boast about their ability to defeat the enemy, and religious leaders sent out calls for jihad against the infidels. Ultimately, though, the Qajars settled for accommodation based on a realistic assessment of relative strength and interests. Real accommodation, meanwhile, took the traditional form of patron-client relationships, of Iran's ruling elite seeking Russians out for financial backing, protection against domestic rivals, and

in the case of the persistent Turkmen problem in Khurasan, defense against foreign aggression. In the absence of the concept of inherent loyalty to a state by way of political patriotism, none of this bore the connotation of betrayal of the nation.

The Iranian reaction to Russia in the nineteenth century is at once more complex and simpler than that vis-à-vis Great Britain. Russia became a model of sorts for forward-looking Iranians, but mostly because of its forceful reformers, Peter and Catherine—the latter having the additional shock quality of being a female. The Iranian political elite saw obvious advantages in the Russian system of governance: autocracy brought stability and order. For reformers, by contrast, a system reminiscent of their own and whose representatives, unlike the British, did not even pay lip service to the ideals of the Iranian constitutional movement, held no promise. The fact that Russia was an immediate neighbor had obvious consequences for the relationship, for it lessened the dream and the romance. The various invasions since the reign of Peter I made Russia a clear and present danger, to the point where one observer in the 1860s claimed that the Iranians deliberately kept the road between Anzali and Rasht in Gilan in a deplorable state so as to prevent the Russians from invading.¹⁰⁰ Some in Iran saw Russia as a refuge; some even expected salvation from it—though mostly in specific and concrete terms, from poverty at home, from greedy and oppressive Qajar-appointed governors in the Caucasus, or from the dreaded Turkmen tribesmen who haunted Khorasan into the early twentieth century. Russia did not generate any quasi-eschatological expectations in the manner of the West and its governmental system of law, governmental accountability, and bureaucratic restraint. Since it did not raise any unrealistic hopes, it could not be held responsible for dashed illusions. Thus the level of disappointment, the feeling of having been lured into a promise only to be betrayed, never was as strong in the case of Russia as in the case of the English.

All this relates to a perpetual tension between realism and idealism that marks any society but that seems particularly pronounced in Iranian culture and history, affecting especially the country's relations with the outside world. The realism is based on the hard-bitten, historically grounded, and philosophically underpinned notion that self-interest—the pursuit of *zar-o-zur*, gold, and force or power—is the driving force of life, that this produces winners and losers, and that it is imperative to be among the winners. The idealism, the longing for a different, perfect, utopian world, the world that Plato talks about as the one that really matters and toward which we are all striving, is just as ingrained, and it takes many forms. It comes out most eloquently and movingly in Persian poetry. In Iran's relations with the outside world it has in modern times manifested itself in expectations of a *deus ex machina*—type salvation from outside. The tension between these two impulses has always been a creative one, though it has often had a delusional, self-destructive dimension and an inevitably disappointing outcome. Russia, to come back to Russia, could never be the object of such expectations for Iranians—not that is, until it turned communist and projected its own utopia—but that would be the subject of a different chapter.

NOTES

1. For a discussion and examples of this, see Ahmad Ashraf, "The Appeal of Conspiracy Theories to Persians," *Princeton Papers* 5 (Winter 1997): 57–88, and Houchang E.

- Chehabi, "The Paranoid Style in Iranian Historiography," in *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture*, ed. Touraj Atabaki (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 155–76, 294–303.
2. Some initial thoughts may be found in Afshin Matin-asgari, "Marxism, Historiography, and Historical Consciousness: A Preliminary Study," in *ibid.*, 199–232, 306–18.
 3. For the diplomatic relations in this period, see Rudi Matthee, "Anti-Ottoman Concerns and Caucasian Interests: Diplomatic Relations between Iran and Russia under Shah 'Abbas I (1587–1629)," in *Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors*, ed. Michael Mazzaoui (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2003), 101–28. For a brief overview of relations in the mid-seventeenth century, see Rudi Matthee, "Russian-Iranian Relations in the Mid-Seventeenth Century," in *The Tsars and the East: Gifts from Turkey and Iran in the Moscow Kremlin* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Press, 2009), 15–17, 136.
 4. The Iranians were not the only ones who had mostly negative views of the Russians. From the sixteenth century onward, Western European stereotypes have been little better and, in fact, remarkably similar, focusing on boorishness and heavy drinking. See, for example, Anthony Cross, *Peter the Great: Peter the Great through British Eyes. Perceptions and Representations since 1698* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), and, for an overview of the enduring nature of such views, Michael C. Paul, "Western Negative Perceptions of Russia: 'The Cold War Mentality' over Five Hundred Years," *International Social Science Review*, no. 76 (2001): 103–21. For a set of recent studies of the history of Gog and Magog, see Afshar Seyed Gohrab, Faustian Doufikar Aerts, and Senn Mc Glinn, eds., *Embodiments of Evil: Gog and Magog: Interdisciplinary Studies of the "Other" in Literature and Internet Texts* (Amsterdam University Press–Iranian Studies from Leiden University Press, 2011).
 5. Jean Chardin, *Voyages du chevalier Chardin, en Perse, et autres lieux de L'Orient*, ed. L. Langlès, 10 vols. and map (Paris: Le Normant, 1810–11), 3:177–78, 10:113, and Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Les six voyages de Jean Bapt. Tavernier en Turquie, en Perse, et aux Indes*. 2 vols. (Utrecht: Guillaume van de Water, Guillaume & Jacob Poolsum, 1712), 1:535–36.
 6. Reports about Russians being mistreated provided Tsar Peter I with an excuse to invade the country in 1722. As it turns out, these reports were mostly fictitious. See Clemens P. Sidorko, "Kampf den ketzerischen Qizilbash! Die Revolte des Haggi Da'ud (1718–1728)," in *Caucasia between the Ottoman Empire and Iran, 1555–1914*, ed. Raoul Motika and Michael Ursinus (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2000), 133–45.
 7. For this, see Lloyd Eason Berry and Robert O'Crummey, eds., *Rude & Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968).
 8. Chardin, *Voyages du chevalier Chardin*, 3:177–78; 10:113.
 9. Mohammad Yusof Valeh Qazvini Esfahani, *Iran dar zaman-e Shah Safi va Shah 'Abbas-e devvom (Khold-e barin, rowzeh 6, hadiqeh 6–7)*, ed. Mohammad Reza Naseri (Tehran: Entesharat-i Daneshgah-e Tehran, 1380/2001), 114.
 10. J.-B. de la Maze, "Description of northern Iran and specifically Shirvan," untitled, in French, Archivio di Società di Iesu (ARSI), Rome, Gal. 97II, fol. 371v.
 11. A. G. Vorob'eva, "K voprosy o prebivanii Stepana Razina v Azerbaidzhane i Persii," *Izvestiia Akademii Nauk Azerbaidzhanskoi SSR, seriia istorii, filosofii i prava* (1983), no. 3, 35.
 12. For Russia's attempts at co-optation in the region, see Chantal Lemerrier-Quelquejay, "Co-optation of the Elites of Kabarda and Daghestan in the Sixteenth Century," in *The North Caucasus Barrier: The Russian Advance towards the Muslim World*, ed. Abdurahman Avtorkhanov et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), 18–44.
 13. See W. E. Allen, "The Volga-Terek Route in Russo-Caucasian Relations," *Bedi Kartlesi* 15–16 (1963): 158–66.

14. Valeh Qazvini Esfahani, *Iran dar zaman-e Shah Safi va Shah 'Abbas-e devvom*, 67; Michael Kemper, *Herrschaft, Recht und Islam in Daghestan. Von den Khanaten und Gemeindebünden bis zum ġihād-Staat* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2001), 131.
15. Aschot Johannissjan, *Israel Ory und die Armenische Befreiungsidee* (Munich: Müller & Sohn, 1913), 105.
16. See P. P. Bushev, *Posol'stvo Artemiia Volynskogo v Iran v 1715–1718 gg.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1987).
17. For the Russo-Iranian diplomatic exchange during the reign of Nader Shah, see Willem Floor, ed. and trans., *The Rise and Fall of Nader Shah. Dutch East India Company Records, 1730–1747* (Washington, DC: Mage, 2009), 20–24, 43, 54–55, 61.
18. R. Mignan, *Winter's Journey through Russia, the Caucasus Alps and Georgia; Across Mount Zagros, by the Pass of Xenophon and the Ten Thousand Greeks, into Koordistaun*, 2 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1839), 1:69. Güldenstädt published his findings as *Reisen durch Rußland und im Caucasischen Gebürge* (St. Petersburg: Kayserliche Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1787–91).
19. J. McNeill, *Progress and the Present Position of Russia in the East*, 2nd ed. (London: J. Murray, 1838), 31–33; P. B[utkov], “O proisshetviakh' sluchivishikhya pri osnovany russkavo seleniya na beregu Astrabatskovo Zaliva v' 1781 godu,” *Zhurnal' Ministerstva Vnutrennikh' Dlat'* 9 (1839): 10–45; Michel Lesure, “L'expédition d'Astrabad (1781–1782). Est-elle encore un secret d'état?” in *Passé Turco-Tatar présent Sovietique. Études offertes à Alexandre Bennigsen*, Ch. Lemerrier-Quelquejay, G. Veinstein, and S. E. Wimbush (Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1986), 215–29.
20. Muriel Atkin, *Russia and Iran, 1780–1828* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 34, 37.
21. James B. Fraser, *Travels and Adventures in the Persian Provinces on the Southern Banks of the Caspian Sea* (London: Longman, Reese, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1826), 144; and William Monteith, “Notes on Georgia and the New Russian Conquests beyond the Caucasus” ([n. p.], 1829), 6.
22. Bushev, ed., *Posol'stvo Artemiia Volynskogo*, 194.
23. Jonas Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade over the Caspian Sea: With a Journal of Travels through Russia into Persia . . . to which are added, The Revolutions of Persia during the Present Century, with the Particular History of the Great Usurper Nadir Kouli*, 4 vols. (London: Dodsley, 1753), 1:222.
24. *Ibid.*, 166.
25. A. I. Iukht, “Armianskii remeslenniki v Astrakhane v pervoi polovinie XVIII veka,” *Teghekagir Hasarakakan Gitut'yunneri* (1958), 37–54.
26. Vazken S. Gougassian, *The Emergence of the Armenian Diocese of New Julfa in the Seventeenth Century* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998), 46.
27. Cornelis de Bruyn, *Reizen over Moskovie en in Perzie* (Amsterdam: R. en G. Wetstein, J. Oosterwijk, H. Van de Gaete, 1714), 103–4.
28. *Ibid.*, 434. De Bruyn prophetically concluded that, given the region's economic importance, it would indeed be worth the Russians' while to invade, and that it would be a relatively simple operation, only requiring a small force.
29. Hanway, *An Historical Account of the British Trade*, 3:156.
30. Samuel Gottlieb Gmelin, *Travels through Northern Persia 1770–1774*, trans. and ed. Willem Floor (Washington, DC: Mage Publishers 2007), 12.
31. Maryam Ekhtiyar, “An Encounter with the Russian Czar: The Image of Peter the Great in Early Qajar Historical Writing,” *Iranian Studies* 29 (1996): 57–70.
32. Fereydun Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Iran*, 5th ed. (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 2535/1976), 163. The list also included biographies of that other “great” and energetic leader, Napoleon Bonaparte. See Iraj Afshar, “Book Translations as a Cultural Activity in

- Iran 1806–1896,” *Iran: British Journal of Persian Studies* 41 (2003): 279–90, and Abbas Amanat, “Historiography, Qajar Period,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica* 12 (2004), 374.
33. Mirza Mohammad Kalantar-e Fars, *Ruznameh-ye Mirza Mohammad Kalantar-e Fars*, ed. ‘Abbas Eqbal (Tehran: Tahuri, 1362/1983), 89.
 34. Sir John Malcolm, *The History of Persia, from the Most Early Period to the Present Time*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1815): 2:296.
 35. Mohammad Hashem Asef (Rostam al-Hokama), *Rostam al-tavarikh*, ed. Mohammad Moshiri (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1348/1969; 2nd ed., 1352/1973), 198.
 36. Atkin, *Russia and Iran*, 73; Reza Qoli Khan Hedayat, *Tarikh-e rawzat al-safa-ye Naseri*, 10 vols. (Tehran: Markaz-e Khayyam Piruz, 1339/1960), 9:389; Wilhelm von Freygang, *Letters from the Caucasus and Georgia*, trans. from the French (London: John Murray, 1828), 160.
 37. The Iranian portrayal of Russians represents an ironic mirror image to the way in which Russians tended to see Iranians. Just as Iranians typically saw Russians as uncivilized, the Russians showed nothing but contempt for Iranians and Muslims in general. In their travelogues, they degraded Islam and objectified its practitioners in the crudest of terms, dismissing them as fanatical and culturally backward. This came out in the brutal treatment meted out to Muslims by General Tsitsianov but also is reflected in the characterizations of Iranians found in the many travelogues written by Russians in the course of the nineteenth century, which degraded Islam and objectified its practitioners in the crudest of terms, dismissing them as fanatical and culturally backward. For extensive references to this, see Elena Andreeva, *Russia and Iran in the Great Game: Travelogues and Orientalism* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2007).
 38. Moritz von Kotzebue, *Narrative of Journey into Persia, in the Suite of the Imperial Russian Embassy in the Year 1817*, trans. from the German (London: Longman, Hurst, Reese, Orme, and Brown, 1819), 166–67. See also John F. Baddeley, *The Russian Conquest of the Caucasus* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1908), 102, and George A. Bournoutian, *The Khanate of Erevan Under Qajar Rule 1795–1828* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1992), 23n.
 39. Mignan, *Winter’s Journey through Russia*, 1:94.
 40. Hasan Fasa’i, *History of Persia under Qājār Rule*, trans. Heribert Busse (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 127, 174–76; Ottokar von Schlechta-Wssehrd, “Der letzte persisch-russische Krieg (1826–1828) Episode aus der Geschichte des modernen Persien,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 20 (1866): 294–97.
 41. Fraser, *Travels and Adventures*, 306–7.
 42. See Cyrus Masroori, “Russian Imperialism and Jihad: Early 19th-Century Religious Texts on Just War,” *Journal of Church and State* 46 (2004): 263–79.
 43. ‘Abd al-Hadi Ha’eri, *Nakhostin ruyaru’iha-ye andishehgaran-e Iran ba du ruya-ye tamaddun-i burzvhazi-ye gharb* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1367/1988), 379–80.
 44. Mirza Abu’l-Hasan Khan Shirazi “Ilchi,” *Dalil al-sofara. Safarnameh-ye Mirza Abu’l Hasan Khan Shirazi “Ilchi” beh Rusiyeh*, ed. Mohammad Golbon (Tehran: Donya-ye ketab, 1363/1984), 29, 150. For a discussion of these and other themes in the travelogues, but without much by way of historical background see Anna Vanzan, “Mīrzā Abu’l Hasan Khān Šīrāzi Īlčī’s Safar-nāma ba Rūsia: The Persians Amongst the Russians,” in *Society and Culture in Qajar Iran. Studies in Honor of Hafez Farmayan*, ed. Elton L. Daniel (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2002), 347–58.
 45. Irène Nachkebia, “Tiflis/Tbilissi dans les écrits français du début du XIXe siècle,” in *La Géorgie entre la Perse et Europe*, ed. Florence Hellot-Bellier and Irène Natchkebia (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2009), 94.
 46. T. B. Armstrong, *Journal of Travels in the Seat of War During the Last Two Campaigns of Russia and Turkey* (London: A. Sequin, 1831), 123, 168.

47. Sir Robert Ker Porter, *Travels in Georgia, Persia, Armenia, and Babylonia &c &c, during the Years 1818, 1819, 1820* (London: Longman, Rees, Hurst, Orme and Brown, 1821–22), 349.
48. See Abbas Amanat, “‘Russian Intrusion into the Guarded Domain’: Reflections of a Qajar Statesman on the European Expansion,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 113 (1993), esp. 44, 46, 48, 53.
49. Mirza Fazl Allah Shirazi (Khavari), *Tarikh-e Zu'l Qarneyn*, 2 vols. paginated as one, ed. Naser Afsharfar (Tehran: Ketabkhaneh muzeh va markaz-e asnad-e Majles-e Shura-ye Eslami, 1380/2001), 194, 204, 207, 210, 270, 286, 287, 351.
50. Ibid., 702–3. See Laurence Kelly, *Diplomacy and Murder in Tehran: Alexander Griboyedov and Imperial Russia's Mission to the Shah of Persia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 187–94.
51. Shirazi (Khavari), *Tarikh-e Zu'l Qarneyn*, 186–87, 615.
52. Ibid., 187.
53. Dr. Moritz Wagner, *Travels in Persia, Georgia and Koordistan with Sketches of the Cossacks and the Caucasus*, 3 vols., trans. from the German (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1856), 3:16, 80.
54. Robert B. M. Binning, *A Journey of Two Years' Travel in Persia, Ceylon, Etc.*, 2 vols. (London: W. H. Allen, 1857), 2:303.
55. Lieut.-Colonel Stuart, *Journal of a Residence in Northern Persia and the Adjacent Provinces of Turkey* (London: Richard Bentley, 1854), 323.
56. Atkin, *Russia and Iran*, 106.
57. Comte A. de Gobineau, *Trois ans en Asie*, in Idem, *Oeuvres* (Paris: Gallimard, 1983), 2, †231; and Adrienne Doris Hytier, ed., *Dépêches diplomatiques du comte de Gobineau en Perse* (Geneva: E. Droz, 1959), 36–37.
58. John C. B. Johnson, *A Voyage from India to England through Persia, Georgia, Russia, Poland, and Prussia in the Year 1817* (London: Longman, Rees, Hurst, Orme, and Brown, 1818), 231.
59. Fasa'i, *History of Persia*, 182; and Von Schlechta-Wssehrd, “Der letzte persisch-russische Krieg,” 305–7.
60. H. A. Munroe-Butler-Johnston, *A Trip up the Volga to the Fair of Nijni Novgorod* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1876), 71; Comte de Panisse, *La Russie, la Perse, l'Inde. Souvenirs de voyages, 1865–1866* (Paris: Jouaust, 1867), 40.
61. Nicolaus von Nassakin, “Von der Messe in Nishni-Nowgorod,” *Oesterreichische Monatschrift für den Orients* 12 (1886): 168.
62. F. de Filippi, *Note di un viaggio in Persia nel 1862* (Milan: D. Daelli, 1865), 51.
63. Schapour Ravasani, *Sowjetrepublik Gilan. Die sozialistische Bewegung im Iran seit Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1922* (Berlin: Basis Verlag, n.d.), 124–25.
64. Mignan, *Winter Journey*, 1:77. This is how the German Moritz von Kotzebue, traveling with the Russian embassy in 1817, described the changes in Tiflis from a year earlier: “The roads throughout the province were impracticable, and Tiflis itself was buried in mud. This city owes its present improved condition to General Yermoloff. He has, within a short period, built houses, paved streets, and laid out squares, in order to afford a free circulation of air through the narrow and filthy streets of the town. In short, any one who left Tiflis a year ago would not now know it again.” See Von Kotzebue, *Narrative of Journey into Persia*, 50.
65. Homa Nategh, *Iran dar rahyabi-yi farhangi 1834–1848* (Paris: Khavaran, and Ottawa: Pegah, 1990), 161–62.
66. Mignan, *Winter Journey*, 1:73–74.
67. The German economist Franz von Haxthausen, visiting Tblisi in the 1840s, spoke of the oppressive rule of the region's former Iranian masters yet observed that under Russian control taxes were actually three times as high. As he put it, “The inhabitants complain that their condition at present is more oppressed than it was under the Persians,

- notwithstanding that the Persian officials exercised an extremely arbitrary and despotic power over them." See Baron von Haxthausen, *Transcaucasia. Sketches of the Nations and Races between the Black Sea and the Caspian* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1854), 201.
68. See Afsaneh Najmabadi, *The Story of the Daughters of Quchan: Gender and National Memory in Iranian History* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 38, 40, 135; Touraj Atabaki, "Disgruntled Guests: Iranian Subalterns on the Margins of the Tsarist Empire," *International Review of Social History* 48 (2003): 401–26; Shahbaz Shahnavaz, *Britain and the Opening Up of South-West Persia 1880–1914* (London: Routledge-Curzon, 2005), 21; and Florence Hellot-Bellier, "L'Emigration des Chrétiens d'Azerbaïdjan persan vers Tiflis au 19^e siècle," in *La Géorgie entre la Perse et l'Europe*, ed. Hellot-Bellier and Irène Nachkebia (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 177–86. Hellot-Bellier, 185, claims that Azerbaijan lost one third of its Armenian population and almost one-fourth of its Assyro-Chaldeans to the Russian-controlled Caucasus in the course of the nineteenth century.
 69. For many references to this issue, see Andreeva, *Russia and Iran*, 185ff.
 70. Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Iran*, 472–3.
 71. For this, see Rudi Matthee, "Between Sympathy and Enmity: Nineteenth-Century Iranian View of the British and the Russians," in Beate Eschment and Hans Harder, eds, *Looking at the Coloniser: Cross-Cultural Perceptions in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Bengal, and Related Areas* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004), 311–38. Abbas Amanat notes how modern Iranian commentators often anachronistically stigmatize Mirza 'Abd al-Hasan Shirazi as a traitor. See Amanat, "Russian Intrusion into the Guarded Domain," 40.
 72. Mirza Saleh Shirazi, *Majmu'eh-ye safarnameha-ye Mirza Saleh Shirazi*, ed. Gholam Hosayn Mirza Saleh (Tehran: Nashr-e tarikh-e Iran, 1364/1985), 81–83, 100–1, 117–18.
 73. Fereydun Adamiyat, *Fekr-e azadi va moqaddemeh-ye nehzat-i Mashrutiyyat-e Iran* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1340/1961), 39.
 74. Stuart, *Journal of a Residence in Northern Persia*, 175, 312.
 75. Mirza Taqi Khan apparently even picked up more than a smattering of the Russian language during the voyage. Four years after his visit to St Petersburg he accompanied Crown Prince Naser al-Din Mirza on a visit to Yerevan, and was received in audience by Tsar Nicolas I. The tsar addressed the delegation in Russian, and Mirza Taqi Khan is said to have responded in that language. Russian expressions and proverbs appear in his letters as well. See Amir Kabir, *Namehha-ye Amir Kabir*, ed. Sayyed 'Ali Al-e Davud (Tehran: Nashr-e tarikh-e Iran, 1371/1992), introduction, 13.
 76. Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir*, 178–79.
 77. Michael Volodarsky, "Persia's Foreign Policy between the Two Herat Crises, 1831–56," *Middle Eastern Studies* 21 (1985): 111.
 78. See Hosayn Mahbubi Ardakani, *Tarikh-e mo'asassat-e tamaddoni-ye jadid dar Iran*, 2 vols., 3rd ed. (Tehran: Entesharat-e Daneshgah-e Tehran, 1378/1999), 1:195. Stuart, *Journal*, 227, refers to the brother of one Mirza Baba as having been educated as a miner in Russia.
 79. For this, see Hassan Hakimian, "Wage Labor and Migration: Persian Workers in Southern Russia, 1880–1914," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 17 (1985): 443–62.
 80. For this, see Golnaz Sa'idi, *Engelab-e avval-e Rusiyyeh va 'asr-e Mashrutiyyat. Tahavollat-e Iran va Asiya-ye Miyaneh* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1384/2005).
 81. Edward G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909* (London: Frank Cass, 1966), 429–30, quotes the Russian social-democratic magazine *Sovremenny Mir*. For a similar sentiment, see Sir Arthur H. Hardinge, *A Diplomatist in the East* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1928), 344–45.
 82. National Archives of England (NA, formerly PRO), FO 881/8519, Churchill, Rasht to Hardinge, Tehran, December 23, 1904.

83. James Clark, "Abd-Allah Mostawfi in Russia, 1904–1909," in Elton L. Daniel, ed., *Society and Culture in Qajar Iran: Studies in Honor of Hafez Farmayan* (Costa Mesa, CA, 2002), 206–7.
84. The outcome of the war even prompted an Iranian poet named Mirza Hoseyn 'Ali to compose a *Mikadu-nameh* modeled after the *Shahnameh*. This was published in Calcutta in 1323/1905–6. See Roxane Haag-Higuchi, "A Topos and Its Dissolution: Japan in Some 20th-Century Iranian Texts," *Iranian Studies* 29 (1996): 74, which provides the larger context of Iran's fascination with Japan as a template for modernization at this time. The wider Muslim and Asian response to the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War is discussed in Cemil Aydin, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 71–92.
85. Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, 122; Hardinge, *A Diplomatist*, 345; "Persia in 1905," in R. M. Burrell and Robert L. Jarman, eds, *Iran Political Diaries 1881–1965*, vol. 2, 1901–1905 (London: Archive Editions, 1997), 2:508.
86. Mansour Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911: Foreign Policy, Imperialism and Dissent* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 109.
87. See Zeyn al-'Abedin Maragheh'i, *Siyahatnameh-ye Ebrahim Beyk*, ed. Baqer Mo'meni, 4th ed. (Tehran: n.p., 2537/1978); and Zayn ol-Abedin Maraghe'i, *The Travel Diary of Ebrahim Beg*, trans. James D. Clark (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2006).
88. "General Report on Persia for the First Nine Months of the Year 1907," in Burrell and Jarman, eds, *Iran Political Diaries 1881–1965*, vol. 3, 1906–1908, 671, 674.
89. NA, FO 371/498, Spring-Rice to Grey, 13 Sept. 1907.
90. See *Habl al-Matin* 9 Sept. 1907; Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitution Revolution 1906–1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy and the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1996; and Raoul Motika, *Die politische Öffentlichkeit iranisch-Aserbaidschans während der konstitutionellen Revolution im Spiegel der Täbriser Zeitung Äzerbâyğân* (Frankfurt a/Main: Peter Lang, 2001), 144–47.
91. See Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, 275–82, for the numerous complaints about the Russians and their behavior listed in an eighteen-page pamphlet that was distributed in the city.
92. For the information on Mohammad Amin Rasolzadeh, see NA, FO 371/144, Barclay to Grey, 28 Jan. 1912, Persia, Annual Report, p. 5.
93. German Foreign Office Archives, Auswärtiges Amt (AA), Berlin, Politisches Archiv (PA), R19113, Die persische Presse, A. Quadt, Tehran to AA, Berlin, 20 Nov. 1909; idem to idem, 4 March 1910. For a profile of both newspapers, see Edward G. Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 52–53, 110–11.
94. AA, PA, R19030, Persiens Politik gegenüber England und Russland, "Die Russische Brigade in Täbriz," attachment to letter A. Quadt, Tehran to AA, Berlin, 6 Oct. 1909. Also see A. Quadt, Tehran to AA, Berlin, 9 Dec. 1909, where he talks about drunken Russian soldiers shooting their rifles in the air in Tehran.
95. See the eyewitness report by Anna Harnack, in Wilhelm Litten, *Persische Flitterwochen* (Berlin: Georg Stilke, 1925), 27; and Hourì Berberian, *The Love for Freedom Has No Fatherland: Armenians and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1911* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001), 174–75.
96. For these events, see Edward G. Browne, *Letters from Tabriz: The Russian Suppression of the Iranian Constitutional Movement*, ed. Hasan Javadi (Washington, DC: Mage, 2008).
97. AA, PA, R19030, Persiens Politik gegenüber England und Russland, Kühlmann, London to AA, Berlin, 4 Sept. 1912. See W. Morgan Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia. Story of the European Diplomacy and Oriental Intrigue that Resulted in the Denaturalization of Twelve Million Mohammedans* (New York: Century Co., 1912; repr. 1968), 218–23.

98. *Habl al-Matin*, 8 April 1912.
99. See Rasul Ja'fariyan, "Mosibatnameh. Yek sanad-e adabi az vaqi'eh-e hamleh-ye Rusha beh haram-e Imam Reza 'aleyho al-salam," in Idem, *Maqalat-e tarikhi* 6 (Qom: Entesharat-e Dalil, 1379/2000): 105–16.
100. Le Comte de Panisse, *La Russie*, 86. In reality, the Russian at no point needed the road connecting the Caspian Sea with the country's interior for military purposes, since the route from Yerevan to Tabriz in Azerbaijan offered much better access to Iran. At the turn of the twentieth century, the Russians improved the road between Rasht and Tehran at great cost, and for commercial rather than military purposes. See H. J. Whigham, *The Persian Problem: An Examination of the Rival Positions of Russia and Great Britain in Persia with some Account of the Persian Gulf and the Baghdad Railway* (New York: Scribner's, 1903), 398.

CHAPTER 6

THROUGH THE PERSIAN EYE

ANGLOPHILIA AND ANGLOPHOBIA IN MODERN IRANIAN HISTORY*

ABBAS AMANAT

IN MAY 1621 THE CELEBRATED SAFAVID RULER Shah Abbas I (r. 1588–1629) summoned to his court in Isfahan two Italian priests, who had brought back a message from the Pope, presumably Paul V, for the shah. They were to engage in a debate with the chief English commercial agent, a certain Mr. Monox, and his accompanying chaplain from the Church of England. Inquiring about the sectarian rift that divided Christian Europe, the shah momentarily favored the Catholic position by drawing comparison between Sunni and Shi'i Islam. With some animation in his voice, he reportedly remarked, "Just as the Sunnis and Turkish [i.e., Ottoman] heretics will not ascribe [to] the primacy of Hussein [i.e., the third Shi'i Imam], son of Amir al-Mu'minin [i.e., Ali] but to 'Umar, so the English do not obey the vicar of Jesus, who is the Pope of Rome, and for this they are heretics." Shortly after, however, in the course of the same debate, the shah sided with the English, who were eager to discuss business with the shah rather than points of theology. Reproving of the Italian padres' constant attacks on the English heresy and accusations of religious falsehood, the shah said, "The English have not told him falsehoods and had always carried out their promises and were of much utility in his country."¹

Evidently Shah Abbas' ambivalence toward English Protestantism did not prevent him from approving of their business ethics. Shortly after the debate he allowed the English to play a significant part in breaking the commercial monopoly of the Catholic Portuguese in the Persian Gulf. Having gained greater visibility on the Iranian horizon from the beginning of the seventeenth century with the establishment of the East India Company (EIC), the English trade thrived, at least for a while.

*An earlier version of this chapter was first delivered as a lecture in May 2006 to Iran Society in London in memory of Sir Denis Wright, the former British Ambassador to Iran and a noted scholar of the Anglo-Persian relations. I would like to express my gratitude to Iran Society for the invitation.

The ascendancy of the English in Abbas' court too—epitomized by the presence of the Shirley Brothers—may well qualify him as the first Iranian Anglophile; having been impressed with English technological skills and their presumed commercial integrity and their knowledge of European politics.

Over the next four centuries, trade and diplomacy remained major traits in Anglo-Iranian relations and save for moments of confrontation and intrigue—and undeniably there were several crucial episodes—Britain came to play an important role not only in Iran's diplomacy and economy but in the shaping of its political identity. This was at a critical juncture when Iranians first began to face their neighboring imperial powers. As a source of inspiration for English imagination, Iranian land, culture, and peoples also came to occupy an important place in the British awareness and its own superiority. Iran offered a challenge, a problematic case, for it was a country neither colonized nor conquered by the imperial power nor ever was left to its own discretion.

England came to capture the Iranian imagination not only as a world power of extraordinary capabilities to conquer, conspire, and control but as the ultimate *Farangestan*—a land of marvelous prosperity, security, justice, and of course maritime power. In many respects, as it will be argued, Britain in the modern Iranian consciousness came to be the ultimate example of external “other” versus Iran's emerging nationalist “self.” In this respect perhaps no other nation in modern times, at least before the latter half of the twentieth century, competed with the English in capturing the Iranian imagination. By contrast the Russians, who were seen as the greatest territorial threat to Iran throughout the nineteenth and most of the twentieth centuries but nevertheless a counterbalance to the British presence, barely carried similar politico-cultural weight. Nor did the French, who exerted the greatest cultural influence on the shaping of modern Iran, or the Germans who carried great favor with Iranians for siding with them against the Russo-British hegemony in the early twentieth century, figure so largely. The United States, who since the end of the Second World War eclipsed Britain as a superpower with vital interests in Iran during the Cold War and beyond, hardly was seen in the same light as their major European ally, even though in the late twentieth century it superseded Britain in the Iranian postrevolutionary narrative of victimization as the Great Satan.

Somehow the English held an exceptional, albeit ambivalent, grip over the Iranian psyche, which though based on political reality, arrogated to them an undue sense of almost magical superiority. When it comes to tracing an ultimate cause to the seemingly perplexing course of political events, for example, the popular Persian saying, “It is all the political doing of the English” (*hameh siyasat-e engelis-hast*) captures the essence of a discourse of despair, a sarcastic remark with a tinge of self-deprecation that speaks volumes about disempowerment. Yet the same expression also reveals a hidden admiration for the English superior skills, real or imagined, in hatching political plots to dominate others by means of influence, charm, bribery, and of course the policy of divide and rule. Beyond suspicion and fear of English schemes—which permeate even the scholarly works in the form of various conspiratorial theories—Iranian observers often recognized, and grudgingly praised, what they perceived as the English sense of discipline, devotion, and above all “self-control” (*khunsardi*; lit. “cold-bloodedness”). These qualities, as they saw it, made it possible for the people of a small and far away European island to build a vast and

endurable empire all over the globe. Not entirely absent from the Iranian modernizing discourse there also exist the recognition that British global power stemmed from its democratic system of government; its sense of fairness and justice; and the limitations it placed on autocratic rule through parliament, the courts, and the rule of law. As early as the seventeenth century Persian accounts of British society and economy also admired the English for their resourcefulness, scientific and industrial advancements, and the superior quality of their manufactured goods.

How, we then may ask, did such contested, or perhaps complementary (depending on how we look at it), images of Britain come to capture the Iranian imagination for several centuries? After all Iran was neither a British colony nor ever occupied by Britain for a lengthy period of time. The brief British occupation of Bushehr in 1838 and the 1856–57 Anglo-Persian war, both fought over Iran's claim on the province of Herat, though humiliating to the Qajar government, were just retaliatory actions with limited impact on the population. The British occupations during the First and the Second World Wars had a far more direct impact on the population, but they lost their national urgency once the British forces evacuated, even though in both instances memories of these occupations left behind seeds of suspicion and future animosity. Only during the Oil Nationalization Crisis of the postwar era and the premiership of Mohammad Mosaddeq did Britain come to acquire an irreparable reputation as an arrogant transgressor who conspired against Iran's national interests. Even at the time when details of the 1953 coup were not all known, Iranian nationalists saw Britain as the chief culprit and mischief-maker. No other country, not even the USSR and the Tudeh Party, stirred such negative sentiments among the Iranians.

FACING A FRIEND OR A FOE?

At the outset of early modern times, even before the East India Company was incorporated in 1602, English merchants were engaged in silk trade with Iran and successfully competed with the Portuguese, and for a while, with the Dutch factories. As early as 1617 Shah Abbas I granted what may be called the first capitulatory rights (the dreaded Capitulation of later centuries) to the English merchants. Article 1 of this concession, of which only a draft survives in Persian, demanded that "His Majesty the king [of England] will dispatch major and minor emissaries (*ilchi*) to the Imperial Guarded Domain [of Iran] to reside in our fortuitous presence. And as soon as the exulted king of England calls, an emissary were to be sent from our side in order to solidify foundations of friendship and affection that has emerged between us so that friendship and affection be maintained at both ends."² Abbas' desire to consolidate bonds of friendship with England, and the generous terms of capitulatory rights he offered to English merchants, of course was an incentive to persuade England to assist Iran to end the Portuguese monopoly over the trade of the Persian Gulf. In 1622 that paid off when in a well-known episode the EIC's fleet helped transport Safavid troops to the island of Hormuz to recapture the Portuguese stronghold. Yet even from the start of the opening up of Iranian markets to English traders, they did not seem to be particularly popular even with the merchant community or even the shah's own ministers. Pietro Della Valle, the acute Florentine observer of Safavid Iran, noted that English intervention undercut the profit of some Persian merchants and led to severe anti-English backlashes

provoked by the Iranian government agents. Even the shah's earlier enthusiasm was badly dampened.³ The ambivalent Persian attitude remained endemic to Anglo-Iranian relations for decades to come.

When in 1800 Captain John Malcolm of the East India Company arrived at the court of Fath Ali Shah with his extensive entourage and many gifts, the dilemma of welcoming or rebuffing the *Farangis*, and above all the English, still loomed larger than at the time of Shah Abbas some 180 years earlier. This was at a time when the geopolitical, economic, and cultural balance has turned globally in favor of the Christian powers. As Qajar Iran gradually emerged out of a devastating civil war in the late eighteenth century and tried to consolidate against its domestic contenders, it found itself placed between the expanding Russian Empire to its north and the British Empire in the Persian Gulf, and soon after at its southeastern frontiers.

There were of course common strategic interests that tied Iran with British India. Both governments viewed unstable Afghan frontiers as detrimental to their security. And as it soon became very apparent, they both regarded the expansion of the Russian Empire as a serious strategic threat. In a series of wars that Iran unsuccessfully fought in the first quarter of the century and as a result of which lost all its Caucasian possessions, it began to rely on England as a counterbalance against its expansionist northern neighbor. The English appeared as a source of moral support against potential annexation of the rest of Iran's northern provinces.

Iranian experience with the imperial powers did not seem to have immediately deflated the air of complacency so evident in the Qajar court. Though there was an acute awareness of the British imperial power and potential threat of colonial hegemony, Iranian rulers had little interest in adopting modern *Farangi* ways. When Captain John Malcolm was received by Fath Ali Shah in 1801, for instance, the Qajar monarch closely questioned the envoy about the East India Company and its operation. Was it true that the English were robbing India of its riches? He further inquired about the rise of the French general Bonaparte, the gold mines of South America, the art and manufacture of Europe, and the British royal house, its government and people. Yet when Malcolm explained the meaning of liberty in England, the shah reacted by saying that "your king is, I see, only the first magistrate of the country (*kadkhoda-ye auwal*)."⁴ Such a condition of power "has permanence, but it has no enjoyment," whereas absolute authority over the subjects "is real power but then it has no permanence."⁴ If Malcolm accurately reported Fath Ali Shah's words, it is clear the Iranian monarch still was conditioned by the ancient notion of "fight and feast" (*razm va bazm*), as prescribed in the Persian court literature of the past rather than by the English notion of first among equals. For a Qajar "king of kings" that at the time was still busy crushing the restive military warlords throughout Iran, symbols of royal power were shaped as much by military might as by court opulence and pleasure. Such a king was more attuned to Henry VIII's notion of absolute rule than to the post-1688 parliamentary restrictions on the English king.

Receiving another English envoy, Sir Harford Jones in 1809, Fath Ali Shah was perhaps less confident about his own royal authority when he questioned Jones about the English parliamentary system and limits of the kings authority, the French Revolution, the republican system, and the circumstances that led to the loss of the American colonies. Contemplating the British system of government,

the shah then said, "I can easily conceive how a country, under such regulations as you state England to be, may do all that you say, but I have no idea if I was to attempt tomorrow to introduce such things here, how we should all live, or how there would be any government at all . . . Supposing I was to call a Parliament at Tehran, and deliver up to it the whole power of taxation; I should then never get a penny—for no Persian parts with the money, unless he is obliged to do it."⁵

The option of parliamentary experimentation aside, the shah and his government gradually began to taste the treacherous course of European imperial rivalry as much as their own naïve sense of security. The gradual change of attitude is evident, for instance, if we compare representations of Britain in Persian historiography within the course of a decade or so. In the first draft of a history of the Qajar Dynasty that was prepared at the behest of Sir Harford Jones in 1809—and dispatched to him just before his departure in 1811—we find a lengthy passage about Britain. Jones' excellent translation published in 1833, is loyal to the ornate style of the court chronicler, presumably 'Abd al-Razzaq Khan Donboli (with the pen name Maftun), who summarizes the geography and history of Britain. Here the author admires English "excellent pastureland and beautiful meadows," its abundance of water, fine wool, delicately formed horses, and robust inhabitants.

The author further praises the English for "excellent and beautiful workmanship" in producing great quantities of fine watches, military arms, engines, and penknives, as well as silk and woolen cloths. "The English are high-minded and magnanimous," he continues, "skillful, sagacious and intelligent; and their noblemen, honored and esteemed, are possessed of good faith and sincerity. Their power at sea exceeds that of all Europe." He describes London, the capital of *Engelterrah* (Fr. Angloterre) as "a city of delightfully built," with "solid edifices, great inns (of court), academies, and highly ornamented churches," and even a royal palace called parliament, "which is the place of assembly for the counselors of the realm."

Giving an account of the British colonial empire as first initiated by Elizabeth I and of the establishment of the East India Company, the author notes the rapid growth of British colonial possessions in India with no immediate concern: "At the present date the provinces belonging to the English in Hindustan are more numerous and extensive than the countries they possess in Oroopa (i.e., Europe) . . . Therefore we may truly say they have added kingdoms to their kingdom . . . They (i.e., East India Company) in an eminent degree derive great profits and advantages from the commerce of Hindustan." One can barely sense in this account a tangible fear of British colonial empire. The author further assures the reader that not only "from ancient times, until the present period, the bond of union and friendship has firmly subsisted between the States of Iran and Ingreez," but "there has always been an uninterrupted succession of envoys and ambassadors." Afterward there comes a rather laudatory account of Captain Malcolm and his embassy in 1800 aimed at consolidating bonds of friendship between the two states as confirmed in a treaty that offered both sides mutual protection against any power that assumes a hostile position toward either of these two states. In that case, then, the other state was "to commence hostile measures against the foreign aggressor, and to exhibit friendship and assistance to the state so attached."⁶

The promise of mutual assistance against Russian advances however proved to be elusive. At the conclusion of 1813 Golestan Treaty that ended the first round of the Russo-Persian wars, British military assistance barely materialized. It is not a

small wonder that in the Persian version of this account published by Donboli in Tabriz in 1825, just before the start of the second round of the Russo-Persian wars, the whole laudatory passage concerning England is substantially truncated and its praiseful tone dropped. Donboli's history was one of the earliest books printed in Iran in the Qajar period. At the time the author and his patron, 'Abbas Mirza, the crown prince, must have felt ambivalent, though not entirely hopeless, about British assistance for their war efforts. The assistance never fully materialized, yet the printed Persian version of the Qajar history did not cease praising the "wisdom-nurturing statesmen of the sublime English government of *Farang*" for "setting order to the affairs of the state and demonstrating industrial skills and exploring innovation." The author however no longer speaks of any promise of military assistance nor is praiseful of the English colonial advance.⁷

Yet ironically, colonizing India helped promote rather than demote British prestige among the Qajar elite, in part because the mainstream Persian political culture, like all its premodern counterparts, celebrated the powerful. It grudgingly admired a shrewd imperial power that, coming from overseas thousands of miles away, had managed with minimum effort to extract maximum benefit from the conquered lands and peoples. As it appeared through the Persian prism, this was achieved in India with little bloodshed and through good government. The image of Britain as a formidable and cunning power was further augmented at the end of the Napoleonic era when after more than a decade of warfare, Britain and its allies prevailed over France. Prior to that in Iran, as in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere, Napoleon momentarily was seen as a window of hope against Russian aggression. The Gardane military mission to Iran sent by Napoleon in 1807 briefly captivated the Iranian imagination as a formidable alternative to Britain. When by 1809 that hope was rapidly dashed and the British jubilantly returned to the Persian court, they appeared ever more awesome and invincible.

Beyond court chroniclers and their official narratives, however, there was an evolving perception of British power deeply suspicious of the *Farangis* and their schemes for colonial domination over Iran. This was of course without ever losing sight of English sagacity and calculative schemes. One remarkable example is the eccentric historian (and not so far properly identified) Mohammad Hashem Asaf, with the self-proclaimed title of "Rostam al-Hokama" (Rostam of the Philosophers). Among other works he is the author of *Rostam al-Tavarikh*, a semi-fictional narrative in the fantastic genre of storytellers (*naqqals*). Probably written in several renditions between the 1810s and 1840s, it relied on the collective memory of several generations in his own family to cover a long historical span between the end of the Safavid period and the middle of Fath 'Ali Shah's reign (1720s–1820s). The author saw the reign of Karim Khan Zand (1750–79) as a golden age about which he could speak only with affection and nostalgia.

In a long passage in *Rostam al-Tavarikh* the author cites what appears to be a semifictional conversation between Karim Khan and a group of his advisors, among whom was Aqa Muhammad Khan, the founder of the Qajar dynasty, then a hostage in the custody of the Zand ruler in Shiraz. When an English emissary arrives in the court of Karim Khan with many gifts (presumably circa 1770s), his presence stirs a debate in the court with Karim Khan himself suspicious of the English potential threat. "I know what their objective is," Karim Khan had reportedly proclaimed, "They intend to capture and dominate the kingdom of Iran with charade

and trickery in the same fashion that they took possession of kingdoms of India with trickery and deceit . . . We do not buy the *Farangis'* charade (*ma rishkhand-e Farangi ra be rish-e khod nemipazirim*) and people of Iran in no way what so ever are in need of gifts and fabrics and manufactures of *Farang* since there are ample amount of cotton, wool, fine wool, and silk in Iran. Whatever people of Iran want they can manufacture and wear." Sensing the pro-English tendency among his own advisors, Karim Khan again cautions his advisors that

if [some of] you think that once the *Farangis* become master of Iran you still will be able to maintain your high positions, you are wrong. If the *Farangis* hold sway over Iran, God forbid, not a single one of you will be spared for they will kill you all because they consider you traitors . . . And know that if God forbid *Farangis* become master of Iran, it will eradicate Islam with confidence and free of any fear and will bring to ruination the notables and aristocracy of Iran. Beware that *Farangis* captured India with intelligence and foresight and shrewdness and not with force and robustness and chivalry.

This attitude is backed in the fertile imagination of the author by his other hero and "champion of Iran" Aqa Muhammad Khan Qajar who resorts to a similitude in comparing Iran and Britain: "Iran is like a powerful but wildly mule and *Farangi* is like a resourceful and intelligent philosopher (*Iran manand-e astari nirumand [va] chamush va Farangi chun filsuf-e kardan [va] por-hush*). And one can not saddle a wild mule but with tricks and stratagem." The fictional Aqa Mohammad Khan then further recommends that the Zand Khan should receive the English emissary and after a show of force and doubling the amount of the reciprocal gifts should allow him to return to India. Then on the way back his party should be captured and entirely eliminated except for the emissary himself, who should be first mutilated and then allowed to return. Rostam tells us that Karim Khan duly followed this treacherous scheme and as a result much consternation was generated in India. Yet the English did not see any choice but to come to terms with the Iranians and abandon any plan of confrontation.

To conclude this quixotic fantasy, the author composes a few *Shahnameh*-like verses in praise of Iran's superior power and prestige and at the expense of the humiliated *Farangis*:

My salute to Iran and its [brave] men!
To its people of battle and warfare!
Once the *Farangi* became fearful of Iran,
He became anxious of Iran and its people . . .
For the land of Iran is a mine for Rostam-like men,
Men like Iranians are rare in the world.
Since Iran is the head of seven domains,
On its feet revolves the firmament of the universe.⁸

Despite its comical overtone, Rostam's was an early example of an Iranian proto-nationalist encountering European, and especially British, hegemony. Though aimed to entertain its audiences, his Anglophobia clearly anticipated a later trend that tended to reaffirm a noble Iranian Self versus a deceptive and cunning Other. That went hand in hand with Rostam's fiercely anticlerical sentiments that foresaw

dark times ahead for the Iranian state thanks to the influence of the fanatical clergy. While facing foreign threats, he implied, the Iranian state once again had fallen under the spell of “pious hypocrites and bigot mullahs.” They eventually will lead Iran to ruination, as they did at the end of the “glorious Safavid state,” and hence open the door for the *Farangis*’ penetration.⁹

By the mid-nineteenth century, the two successive Herat crises of 1837–38 under Mohammad Shah and 1855–57 under Naser al-Din Shah brought home the thrust of the British military threat. Iran considered Herat as its eastern vassalage, vital for its security, whereas British India viewed Herat as a component in its imperial project against Russian expansion. It is perhaps from this time that we hear more often the pejorative phrase: the “deceitful English” (*Engelis-e por-tadlis*) in reference to its colonial designs for Iran—a catchword often rhymed with the anti-Russia phrase: the “ominous Russia” (*Rus-e manhus*). The origin of the latter probably goes back to the Iranian propaganda campaign of the 1820s on the eve of the second round of Russo-Persian wars and was probably taken from Mirza Abul-Qasim Qa'im Maqam's anti-Russian motto: “Russian sedition in the Guarded Domain” (*rekhnesh-ye Rus dar molk-e mahrus*).¹⁰ The anti-British catchword however probably was the outcome of the unsuccessful Herat campaigns. Such characterization of the neighboring powers, it may be argued, resonated with the mythical division between Iran and the neighboring “non-Iran” (*aniran*) but with one important distinction. Here the Guarded Domain was no longer at the center of the mythical world of the *Shahnameh*. Rather, it was the peripheral states north and south of Iran that were now dictating their demands on the weakling Iran, either by force or by deceit.

In a letter written in September 1838 in response to Sir John McNeill, the British envoy to the Persian court, the influential *mojtahed* of Isfahan, Sayyid Mohammad Baqer Shaf'i, in a backhanded way typical of Isfahani humor, calls the English envoy “the undeceiving minister plenipotentiary” (*vazir-e mokhtar-e bi-tadlis-e Engelis*). The clever allusion to McNeill's diplomatic deceit—*bi-tadlis* instead of *por-tadlis*—may not seem as offensive if we take into account the English envoy's haughty attitude in quarreling with the Iranian state that finally led to the break in relations. Soon his threats of retaliation against Iran over Herat were followed by efforts to use Shaf'i to undermine the authority of the Qajar state.¹¹ Shaf'i's response emphasized Iran's natural right to protect its frontiers, the state's sovereignty in temporal affairs, and the British envoy's unreasonable demands on Iran, which were contrary even to English standards of fairness and justice.

Shaf'i wrote his response at a time when the weight of the British intervention in the domestic affairs of Iran was beginning to be felt. Seventeen years later, on November 27, 1855, the young Naser al-Din Shah jotted down a private note to Mirza Aqa Khan Nuri, his cunning Anglophile grand vizier, saying he reserved his deepest resentments for the impending threat of British action in the Persian Gulf that was threatening his very survival on the throne. His attempt in 1856 to recapture Herat came in the wake of a scandalous affair involving the British envoy Charles Murray and consequently the break in relations. Soon afterward came the British retaliation. The campaign of 1857 brought fifteen thousand Indian sepoys aboard a sizable British Indian fleet. In his revealing private note Naser al-Din Shah wrote,

"Last night . . . was the birthday of the Prophet, praise be to him and his family. In a dream I saw a garden with a tall, massive pine tree in the middle. I was viewing it from a distance and the name of the tree was Victoria. Indeed, the tree was the country and the monarchy of England. I ordered the pine tree called Victoria to be uprooted and replanted in another location and said: 'call it Mohammad, Victoria is bad.'"¹²

Too perfect in its naked symbolism to be subliminal, the dream marked not only the break in Anglo-Iranian relations and beginning of hostility but the shah's new sense of patriotic defiance toward a superpower of his time. Perhaps not as quixotic as Rostam al-Hokama, the shah's dream was nonetheless a reflection of how the Qajar political identity in its gestation was tied up to the old notion of protecting the Islamic, more specifically, the Shi'i land and the Shi'i identity.

Understandably, however, he soon was compelled to see the political realities of his time. Even the brief course of hostility with Britain amply proved to him, and to his government, Iran's limited financial resources and its sagging military morale. It became abundantly clear, as in the course of conflict with Russia, that his kingdom had no choice but to accept its status as a "buffer state," squeezed in between two expansionist powers. Consequently, the shah and his ministers had to realize that they had little choice but to develop a conciliatory, yet proactive, course of foreign policy that ideally could exploit the European neighbors' rivalries, suspicions, and fears. Naser al-Din Shah did that with a healthy dose of shrewd skepticism. He tried with some success to balance the aggression of Iran's northern neighbor with the cunning games of its southern one.

What reinforced this seemingly skeptical attitude was a long history of British interference in Iran's domestic affairs; granting unjustified diplomatic protégé status to Iranian subjects, employing as British agents people in positions of influence, even members of the Qajar family; and offering, in exchange for secret collaboration, pensions and other monetary benefits.¹³ The granting of protection to statesmen, notables, military officers, and even renegades—who for one reason or another had fallen out of favor with the Qajar state, and were dismissed from office for various justified and unjustified reasons and who accrued huge financial losses and went bankrupt—often became a major source of contention and serious diplomatic rows between the two governments. At times granting shelter no doubt compensated for the lack of legal protection for some individuals versus the arbitrary power of the state and the person of the shah. At other times however it was a dangerous, but highly tempting, method by which European diplomats (mostly British and Russian) exerted influence, pressurized, and humiliated the Iranian state in the eyes of its own public.

Yet seeking protection was less of a stigma before the emergence of conscious Iranian nationalism in the twentieth century for it neither carried any significant ideological weight (like what later came to be associated with Anglophiles) nor in most cases was seen as an act of treason. It is not perhaps an exaggeration to compare it to the sanctuary (*bast*) taken in the shrines, or the house of the *mojtahids* or the shah's stable. In some instances it was a desperate attempt to seek shelter in a foreign legation as facilitated by capitulatory rights granted in the 1828 Treaty of Turkamanchay to Russia and subsequently enjoyed by Britain and other European powers. Even before meeting his tragic end, the celebrated minister Mirza Taqi Khan Amir Kabir—who was known for his independent course of foreign policy

and later to be elevated to the pantheon of Iranian national heroes—sought protection from the British envoy, Colonel Justin Sheil. And indeed it was the envoy's regretful denial of the written petition from the dismissed grand vizier that precipitated his death in January 1852.¹⁴

The bitter experiences of earlier days, however, facilitated a certain decline in petitioning and granting of protection. Yet as the practice subsided, by the latter part of the nineteenth century the secret ties and legation's connections with statesmen and notables increased, leading gradually to the emergence of pro-British and pro-Russian camps within the Iranian polity. Anglophile or Russophile gravitation extended even to the grand vizier Ali Asghar Khan Amin al-Soltan, who in his long career between 1882 and 1907 intermittently vacillated at least twice between the rival legations. Ironically, Naser al-Din Shah, realizing his helpless position in the face of his own minister's secret—and not so secret—loyalties to the rival legations, came up with an ingenious solution. To counter the danger of foreign intrigue, he willingly persuaded a few of his own loyal ministers and confidants to establish ties with the rival embassies. He hoped to set reliable channels of communication with representatives of the two powers but also to allow the rival tendencies within his government to balance each other.

The case in point was Mohammad Hasan Khan E'temad al-Saltaneh, a pageboy in the shah's inner court who rose to become the official court historian and minister of publications. A close confidant of the shah, he represented the brand of Russophile tendency that was virtually constructed by the shah to balance the Anglophile tendency of his own premier, Amin al-Soltan, who was another former pageboy of his inner court, and that of his minister of foreign affairs, Mahmud Khan Naser al-Molk. In this complex game of inner court politics, rivalry and backdoor diplomacy, one may wonder who was manipulating whom: the shah using his ministers, the ministers using the shah, the shah using the foreign legations, the foreign legations exploiting the shah, the go-betweens manipulating both the shah and the foreign diplomats, or all of the above. It is a small wonder that in the mid-twentieth century the shadow of secret subservience to the British loomed so large in the Iranian imagination. Being a lackey (*nowkar*) of the British embassy was a disparaging label that truly or not could be attached to whomever was associated with Britain and its policies. Likewise, conspiracy theories held the British "hidden hand" responsible for all misfortunes that Iran had suffered ever since the British appearance on the Iranian diplomatic horizon. In the Iranian collective psyche, the sinister English hence came to play a remarkable part unmatched by any other power.

ADMIRING THE ENGLISH WAY

Beyond complex Qajar *realpolitik* and British self-serving designs, some Iranians of the Qajar era developed a deeper appreciation for English society and institutions. One early example is Mir 'Abd al-Latif Shushtari, an Iranian who emigrated to India, where he came into contact with English officials, including the celebrated Orientalist William Jones, with whom he engaged in scholarly exchanges. In his memoirs, *Tohfat al-'Alam* (The Gift of the World), Shushtari, a well-versed Shi'i scholar with a curious mind and historical insight, provides a lengthy account of the *Farang*, and particularly Britain, which he had taken mostly from his English acquaintances. Of particular interest is his succinct description of the modern history of England

and its material culture, as well as his tantalizing references to European scientific and intellectual advances that include the Copernican solar system and Newtonian theory of gravity. Moreover, he is aware of the European colonial challenges to the Muslims and the effects of British domination in India and even the French during the occupation of Egypt under Bonaparte. He offers the first Persian account of the French Revolution, in which he condemns the French—perhaps persuaded by his English sources—for executing their Bourbon monarch Louis XVI.

Closer to home, Shushtari is implicitly critical of the Mughal rulers of India for giving in to the East India Company's designs for control of Bengal. He draws a comparison with the untamable Iranian resistance to foreign domination. "Iranians" he asserts,

are by essence ferocious and by acquired nature Rostam-like (i.e., heroic). They put on the yoke of anyone's obedience, particularly the alien (non-Iranian) people and especially because of difference in religion (i.e., adherence to Shi'ism) they do not comply with foreign hegemony and dominance by nonbelievers, which does not agree with their life. Their rulers and their chiefs (of religion) do not ignore the task of protecting their country and do not allow the nonbelievers to dominate them. And even if because of the neglect of the shah and the elite the country falls into foreign hands, life would become restless and intolerable for the subjects (*ro'aya*) and for the ordinary people and they never get tamed.¹⁵

One can hear an echo of Shushtari's characterization of the Iranians in the work of the aforementioned *Rostam al-Hokama*, complete with the latter's affiliation with Rostam, the quintessential *Shahnameh* champion.

Drawing on the post-Safavid experience of Afghan occupation and the Iranian success in repelling the alien invader, Shushtari then harkens back to earlier invasions in Iranian history to prove that since the time of Alexander's conquest, Iranians remained defiant to foreign domination. Facing Persian resistance to occupation, the author goes on to say, Aristotle advised Alexander that "the nurturer of this land is sun and the people of this country are associated with it. Valor and intelligence are ingrained in their nature and . . . qualities of honor and courage are the effects of that country's climate." Even if people from other lands reside there, in a short while they too acquire the same qualities.¹⁶

Predictably these laudatory expressions of Iranian protonationalism, typical of Iranian visitors to India, are contrasted in Shushtari's account with the alleged docility of the people of India whom he holds responsible for the success of British colonial domination. Dwelling on the East India Company's effective tools for subduing Bengal, Shushtari, however, never stops commending the English for their impressive capabilities. Though he demonstrates a good grasp of English history and the ins and outs of the English political system, he nevertheless seems to be idealizing English society when he observes that "among the laws of this nation is that no one has any domination over anyone else. If the king and his subordinates wish to exert any access toward others, that person can take his case to the court of law."¹⁷

A contemporary of Shushtari, Mirza Abu-Taleb Khan Isfahani, a Perso-Indian secretary who visited England in 1801, offers an ample description of the country, its people, and their life and manners. Yet despite his literary accomplishment and cultural sophistication, Isfahani largely avoids criticizing the English. Enjoying

more than two years of entertainment—hobnobbing with the nobility, flirting with women of all sorts, visiting brothels, and traveling in the vicinity of London—much of his output is confined to descriptions of individuals and Persian *ghazals* of mediocre quality in honor of the English fair sex. He is nevertheless acute enough to appreciate English “liberty laws” (*qavanin-e azadi*), which allowed people within the frame of the law to go wherever they wished and do whatever they wished, something that personally had deep impact on him. “All my life,” he goes on to say, “I never walked about streets and visited shops let alone visiting women’s houses. Having such freedoms, I felt so liberated as if thousands of pounds of weight have been lifted from my shoulder. I was enchained but now I am liberated.”¹⁸ Yet unlike Shushtari, Abu-Taleb is not entirely unaware of the class hierarchy that profoundly divides English society despite appearances of “equality” (*saviyyat*). “In few instances,” he points out, “equality between high and low is merely superficial since the prosperity of the affluent has nothing to do with the life of the lowly. Such a contrast is even greater than what exists between the two classes in India. Complying with formal etiquette among the (class of) servants and their utter subjection in rendering servitude in certain instances is so profound that in comparison Indian servants should be seen as kings.”¹⁹

A decade later, the famous Mirza Abu'l-Hasan Shirazi, better known as Ilchi, who came as the first Persian envoy of the Qajar court to the Court of St. James—and main source of inspiration for James Morrier’s Oriental novel *Hajji Baba of Ispahan*—also produced a rather entertaining account of his observations, especially of English high society in the same vein as Abu Taleb’s. Ilchi became a celebrity and a “talk of the town” not only as an Oriental whose good looks and flamboyance appealed to the women and men of idle English society searching for new amusement. It was also because Abu'l-Hasan did not hesitate to put on display his exotic virility, true to the amorous reputation of his Shirazi origin but with a touch of humor. A broadminded man of poetic taste, he was brave enough to say, “Many a times I prayed to God wishing that Persian women would have had the virtue and chastity of their English counterparts for these women are free and autonomous and no one dominates them. They behave as if no other man but their husbands ever existed. Yet if they show their unveiled sun-like faces to the sincere friends of their husbands, that is because they reserve love for their husbands and would like to entertain their guests.”²⁰

In a conversation with an English woman, Ilchi even went as far as preferring European unveiled woman over Muslim veiled women: “Your way is better since the veiled woman is blind and like a caged bird; when liberated can not fly toward the flower garden but a woman with open wings . . . [is] accomplished in every way.” Though highly liberated for his time, Ilchi’s view was not free from an element of mild sexual innuendo. His comment was really a strategic overture to win over the lady’s heart.²¹

A few years later, Mirza Saleh Shirazi, a gifted observer in the first group of students sent to England in 1815 by the crown prince 'Abbas Mirza, also produced an account of his observations of English society, history, and institutions. But being an intellectual with interest in philosophy and the comparative study of religions, he did not share with his forerunners a preoccupation with English high society and glamorous women. Upon the arrival of the Persian students in England, Sir John Malcolm, the celebrated envoy to the Persian court and author of *The History*

of *Persia*, cautioned him not to attend lavish parties nor engage in debauchery and nightlife that could turn him into the “party piece” of English high society.²² Mirza Saleh took this advice to heart and stayed away from activities that turned his predecessors to nightlife celebrities and instead focused on learning more about the land and the people of the host country.

What is notable in all these accounts in this genre—that continued almost to the end of the nineteenth century—despite all appreciation and all perceptive yet innocent insight into the world their authors came to know, one can detect little enthusiasm for wholesale adapting of English institutions and material advances. To these authors, with few exceptions, English society and institutions, and *Farangi* ways in general, were something to be marveled at but not necessarily imitated or adopted—as if these accounts were still part of the familiar genre of “marvels” (*'aja'ib*) in Persian and Arabic literature. Indeed, the title of an earlier Persian account by E'tesam al-Din, a Bengali secretary who visited England in 1760s, is *Shagarf-nameh-e Velayat* (The Book of Marvels of the Country [of England]).²³

Reading through these often entertaining and informative accounts one cannot avoid admiring their authors' cultural confidence, even originality and pride in their own Persian and Indo-Persian identities. Faced with the formidable material power of the West and dazzling manifestations of prosperity in a European metropolis such as London of the nineteenth century, these visitors strived, almost subconsciously, to preserve their cultural Self and resisted being overwhelmed by the luring marvels of the land of Other. This was an understandable strategy no doubt but one that often prevented them from appreciating, let alone absorbing, the real essence of what today we would call “modernity.” It was as if they observed, and liked, the trees but for most part failed to see the forest of modern *Farang*.

And who can blame them for that? After all, British imperial culture of the time with its manifest racial and cultural biases was by and large reluctant to introduce the means of modernity even to the most enthusiastic “Orientals” who had managed to cross the formidable barriers of religious and cultural prohibition and allow themselves to imitate the ways of the infidels. The case in point is the aforementioned Mirza Saleh Shirazi who despite clear enthusiasm for learning European liberal arts and humanities, including Latin and philosophy, and despite his interest in conducting his studies in an English university, was consistently denied the chance even after appealing to the highest authorities in the Foreign Office. After many months of trying in vain to secure a place at Oxford and after failing to arrange for his stipend to be released by his appointed English guardian, he returned to Iran almost empty-handed—almost empty-handed because he did bring back at least two things and left behind one.

He was impressed so much with one quintessential English cultural institution, the newspaper, that upon his return he established in Tabriz the first Persian newspaper published in Iran, presumably with the patronage of the crown prince 'Abbas Mirza. He called it *Kaghaz-e Akhbar*, a literal translation for the generic term *newspaper*. His prime motive no doubt was to transmit useful information across to his readers about the things he saw in *Farang* as well as the news in his own country. Like Shushtari and Abu-Taleb Khan before him, he was impressed with the function of the newspaper as a public forum for free expression and open debate. That may be the reason why his paper did not survive for long.²⁴ The free space for comment and criticism of society and political norms, even in a limited fashion, had

to wait until the arrival of the Constitutional Revolution some seven decades later. Yet the idea of a weekly paper as means of transmitting news was revived under Amir Kabir in 1849 when he invited an English merchant in Tabriz turned journalist, Edward Burgess, to become the editor of the government-sponsored gazette, *Vaqaye'-e Ettafaqiye*h.

The other more enduring gift of Mirza Saleh from his visit to England was his membership in an English (or possibly Scottish) Masonic lodge into which he was initiated while he was in London. Although not much is known about it, his membership was one of the earliest Iranian affiliations with the Masonic order, an affiliation that fascinated some Iranian Anglophiles in later generations and even more so captivated the conspiratorial imagination of many Iranian Anglophobes in the twentieth century. The former viewed Masonic initiation as an esoteric way of assimilation to the otherwise prohibiting Western, and specifically English, class-conscious society. The latter, by contrast, saw it as a sinister design for British imperial domination and as a means of alienating Muslims from their religion and culture and making them act as agents of colonial control. Unlike the newspaper, which belonged to public space and thus was vulnerable to whims and wishes of the state or could easily offend the conservative religious establishment, Masonic membership was secret and esoteric and hence could endure in small circles often as a pro-Western, and specifically pro-British, cult of universal brotherhood.

If Freemasonry was perceived as an ambiguous space between benign introduction to nonconfessional brotherhood and servitude to British colonialism, there was something undeniably Orientalistic in the way Mirza Saleh was incorporated into the British imperial narrative of his time. Unlike Mirza Abu'l-Hasan Khan Ilchi, who for a while captured the British public imagination, Mirza Saleh did not seem to have been the object of exotic gaze. Yet he was exotic enough to be incorporated into what may be called the ultimate British colonial representation. The well-known Prince Albert Memorial in London's Kensington Garden has a statue of a male figure, closely resembling Mirza Saleh, who among other subjects of the empire surrounds the central statue of Albert, as if they were adoring the benevolent prince. The inclusion of a likeness of Mirza Saleh as a loyal subject of the British Empire reflected something of the English self-image of centrality to a universe of colonial subordinates. The handsome Mirza Saleh, who at best belonged to the periphery of the imperial constellation, thus could only be given entry into the English civilizing circle by means of a figural representation.

The spirit of optimism about English goodwill spread beyond a few Persian visitors in the early decades of the nineteenth century. In July 11, 1823, for instance, a notice appeared in the London *Times* signed by the Persian envoy to Britain inviting English emigrants to settle in the Azerbaijan province under the patronage of the crown prince 'Abbas Mirza. It assured them of not only the fertile land and excellent climate of Azerbaijan but a free plot of land. In addition "as long as they reside in Persia," the announcement went on, "they be exempt from all taxes or contributions of any kind; their property and person be held sacred . . . and they shall be treated with the greatest kindness and attention and, as is the custom of Persia, be at full liberty to enjoy their own religious opinions and feelings, and to follow without control or interruption, their own mode of worship." The crown prince moreover promised to do so out of sincere desire to "promote the welfare of the settlers and [bring about] the improvement of his [own] country." He is convinced from past

experiences that the development of his country will be advanced “through more extended and familiar intercourse with Europeans and especially with those whom he has ever felt pleasure of designating ‘his English friends.’”²⁵

Nothing seems to have come out of this generous initiative that perhaps was inspired by the example of Peter the Great inviting German settlers to his country or Mohammad 'Ali Pasha of Egypt encouraging European emigrants to settle in the cosmopolitan port community of Alexandria. Yet receptivity to English ways was not limited to 'Abbas Mirza and the Tabriz government. Remarkably, even a celebrated *mojtahed* such as Mohammad Baqer Shafte, in his 1838 response to John McNeill, the British Envoy to Qajar Court, in defense of the Iranian government's justified punitive action against the Afghan and Turkmen incursions across the eastern Iranian frontier, wrote, “If such seditions occur in the frontiers of the auspicious British state, beyond a shadow of doubt that state would not condone to any compromise or procrastination . . . It is not that we are unaware of the principals (*qava'ed*) of that auspicious state since the very foundation of those principles is on the idea of preventing harm to the people.” These words by Shafte, who was a bibliophile with a large library, indeed resonated with published accounts such as that of the aforementioned Abu Taleb Khan, an Isfahani fellow citizen. Abu Taleb in his account spoke of the “English laws of liberty” (*qavanin-e azadi-e Engelis*) and the “equity of all English, high and low” before the law. He admired the English crown because it denied itself “the right of appointing and removing the judges and holding them distant from the fear and hope of the state so that in forming their judgments they would not be afraid of anyone.”²⁶

Respect for the rights of the individual and equality before the law indeed became part and parcel of the discourse of reform in Iran in the latter part of the nineteenth century and through to the Constitutional Revolution. Although none of the classics of English liberal enlightenment from Hobbes to John Lock and John Stuart Mill was translated before the mid-twentieth century (the only exception being Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* published in 1907 in a translation by Mohammad Ali Forughi), occasional references to their themes appeared in works of Iranian freethinkers and reformists. Mirza Malkom Khan, perhaps the most influential reformist of the Naseri period, randomly alluded to the English parliamentary system and representation. Yet like most secular reformists of the period, he was more inclined toward the centralized French constitutional model of the Second Empire than English liberal democracy. We see more the traits influenced by Rousseau, Voltaire, and Montesquieu than Locke and Stuart Mill.

In his famous political treatise *Ketabcheh-e Ghaybi* (Invisible Booklet), written around 1862, in several allusive remarks Malkom portrayed Britain more as a colonial power capable of ruling the world than admiring its political ideas and practices. It is because of its orderly government, the argument goes, that Britain acquired such an advanced technology and industry. In a typical rhetorical tone he draws a comparison between the English and the Iranians:

One hundred and fifty thousand of Iranian subjects are suffering in the most abject and atrocious way [presumably a reference to Shi'i Iranians taken captive by Turkmen raiders and sold in the slave markets of Central Asia] while five thousand Indian Spoys can pulverize all Iranian ports [no doubt a reference to the second Anglo-Persian War of 1857] . . . Thirty thousand English soldiers conquered three

hundred *kurur* (i.e., one hundred and fifty million) people [presumably in India]. Yet the Iranian victorious army fled before the Turkmen hordes [no doubt a reference to the disastrous Marv campaign of 1861].

A few pages later, addressing Iranian ministers, Malkom further contrasted the complacency of the Iranian statesmen with the mighty challenges of British power: "His Excellency, the Minister! Gone those days when you were dominating Asia at will. [Those days] there was no one who could traverse two hundred *farsakh* [six hundred kilometers] in ten hours. Those days are long gone when the orderly affairs of the state are perceived to depend on useless pretensions and on the circumference of the minister's vests. Now three thousand *farsakh* (18,000 kilometers) away from Iran they build a steel fortress and bring it over to destroy Mohammara [today's port of Khorramshahr on the Persian Gulf] in two hours."²⁷ One may detect in Malkom Khan's comparisons a sense of despair typical to all reformist literature of the period; an identity crisis in the making. No longer confident of the soundness of Persian political culture and governance, he enthusiastically endorses compliance with the Western model. Malkom's own career, and his tenure as the Persian minister plenipotentiary in London, however, dampened his enthusiasm for wholesale Europeanization. To his credit, he seems to have been more conscious of the dangers of unbridled conversion to an alien culture than many of his successors.

Beyond the discourse of reform that frequently called for strengthening of the state by adopting modern institutions so as to withstand the West's imperial challenge, some other Iranians in the nineteenth century were applauding the British government as a democratic protector of human values. In 1868, for instance, Mirza Hosain 'Ali Nuri, better known as Bahaullah, the celebrated Babi leader and the founder of today's Baha'i Faith, wrote a letter to the queen of England from his exile in the Ottoman Palestine. In the Tablet of Queen Victoria, as it is known, he wrote in his typical Arabic style: "We have been informed that you have forbidden the trading of slaves, both men and women. This, verily, is what God had enjoined in this wondrous revelation [i.e., the Babi-Baha'i Faith] . . . We have also heard that you have entrusted the reins of counseling [i.e., the affairs of the state] into the hands of the representatives of the people. You, indeed, have done well, for thereby the foundation of the edifice of your [state] affairs will be strengthened, and the hearts of all that are beneath your shadow, whether high or low, will be tranquilized."²⁸ Bahaullah's letter is remarkable for emphasis on the plight of the enslaved and disempowered. The trading of slaves here no doubt is a reference to the enforcement of the British abolitionist policy from 1850s on. The reference to the representatives of the people moreover may well be an acknowledgment of the Reform Act of 1867, which transformed the English parliamentary system by widening the electoral franchise.

HOPE AND DESPAIR DURING THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION AND AFTER

By the time of the Constitutional Revolution (1906–11), the two traits of fear and fascination gained a new momentum and, to some extent, were intermingled. First, there was an ephemeral hope for British support for constitutional rule. When that faded, the British image took a rapid dive in the post-Constitutional period

into the murky waters of suspicion and fear. The immense British might and its magical power were believed to be capable of altering Iran's political destiny, a trend that continued with varying intensity all through the twentieth century. A series of developments helped transform the English image. The conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907, creating zones of influence controlled by the former rivals now turned allies; the British occupation of southern Iran in 1915 and from 1918 to 1920 the whole of the country; dissemination of anti-British propaganda by Germans during World War I and later by the Bolsheviks; the near conclusion of the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 and Lord Curzon's vision to turn Iran into a virtual British protectorate; and the British-backed coup of 1921 that brought Reza Khan to power all prepared the ground for this impression. Iranians increasingly came to view Britain as a power that no longer was prepared to honor Iran's "buffer" status—as it did throughout the nineteenth century—but rather was about to turn their country into a proxy state. Such an image, needless to say, was heavily reinforced with the discovery of oil in Khuzestan in 1908 and the British government's acquiring in 1913 substantial share in the newly established Anglo-Persian Oil Company. The expanding operations of APOC (later AIOC) soon proved vital to the British Navy in the course of two world wars and to the British economy for close to half a century.

One can detect hardening of attitude in the literature of the Constitution period and after. Even at the outset of the revolutionary movement in 1905, the press and clandestine tracts displayed a widespread anxiety for imminent European hegemony in the face of Iran's political weakness and the incompetence of its ruling elite. Such perceptions of domination were inseparable from concerns for the end of Iran as a sovereign state and a unified country. Even in July 1906 when thousands of Tehran demonstrators—as many as twenty-four thousand—took sanctuary (*bast*) in the grounds of the compound of the British Legation in Tehran demanding from Mozaffar al-Din Shah the issuance of a constitutional decree, the sense of ambivalence toward British generous support was not entirely missing. A clandestine jellygraphed tract published shortly after the successful end of the *bast* informed its readers, "After the godless oppressors [i.e., the royalists] drenched in blood a large number of innocent petitioners without any crime and closed the gates of security and tranquility, out of desperation we took refuge with the justice-loving state of Britain. That locus of justice and equity granted us sanctuary and warded off the hand of oppressors [while at the same time] seeing through their own objectives."²⁹

By the time of the Anglo-Russian Treaty was about to be concluded in 1907, the celebrated revolutionary preacher, Sayyed Jamal al-Din Isfahani, who was delivering a sermon in a Tehran mosque, reflected general disillusionment with the conduct of the neighboring powers:

For the grace of God, Think! Has God ever created a nation more desperate and ignorant than us Iranians? It is now nearly a year that all the newspapers of the world are writing that Britain and Russia are planning to conclude a treaty over Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet. We, the Iranian people, too, read these papers and see these words [but] all this time not a single person raised his voice to say: "for heavens' sake, what is going on? Are all the people of Iran dead that now over division of their country you sign a treaty of friendship and alliance? . . . We people of Iran are really corpses; and so are our representatives (in the Majles)."³⁰

The Iranian protests fell on deaf ears. Whatever little assurance the representative of the two powers offered to Iranians proved dismally false when in 1911 the joint ultimatum of Russia and Britain demanded the closure of the Iranian parliament and suspension of the Constitution. Whatever was left of the Iranian goodwill toward Britain and its support for the cause of Constitutionalism evaporated. A letter by two proconstitutional chief *mojtaheds* of Najaf, Mohammad Kazem Khorasani and Abdollah Mazandarani, addressed through the British legation in Tehran to the “English Court,” reflects the depth of Iranian disillusionment:

Never could have we imagined that the justice worshipping and freedom loving nation of (Britain), who presented itself all over the world as a supporter for human rights (*hoquq-e bashar*), would abandon its firm traditional course and collaborate with the Russian government in removing Iran’s freedom and independence and engaging in the south of Iran in a maltreatment similar to Russians in the north. The recently awakened Iranian people who sacrificed so much, shed so much of their blood and lost so many of their livelihoods in order to defend their national rights and break the chains of captivity and remove the yoke of enslavement placed on them by their ruling dynasty, will not succumb to foreign subjugation. They are ready to sacrifice the remnant of their population and property in pursuit of their national sovereignty . . . At this juncture, when the newly awakened Iranian nation is acquiring its fundamental order [i.e., the Constitution], it is encountering the same obstacles that the exalted nation and people of Britain faced at the time of establishing their own constitution. We thus beg that if Britain is not extending its support and is not discharging its neighborly commitments, at least it should refrain from creating obstacles on the way of Iranian aspirations and (instead) try to dissuade the sublime Russian government from engaging in unjust actions and intrusive interventions; actions that consumed all the efforts of the Iranian statesmen so as to stop such despotic intrigues.³¹

Shortly after in November 1912 the celebrated revolutionary poet, Mohammad Taqi Bahar (Malik al-Shu'ara), in a long poem—a *qasida* (panegyric) of thirty nine verses—addressed to the British Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, the architect of the Anglo-Russian *Entente*, echoed the same sentiments. He criticized the dramatic shift in British foreign policy and its disastrous outcome for Iran (here in a masterful translation by Edward Browne):

To London speed, O breeze of dawning day,
 Bear this, my message to Sir Edward Grey.
 To thee in skill, wise Consular of the State,
 Ne'er did the world produce a peer or mate . . .
 Alas that thou, for all thy wits, hast wrought
 A deed which save regret can yield thee naught! . . .
 Not Persia only feels the Russian Squeeze,
 'Tis felt by Afghans and by Kashgharis!
 From Tabriz to Sarakhs her soldiers dwell,
 Some twenty thousand, if you count them well.³²

By the time the 1919 treaty came about, the nationalist Iranian press was near unanimous in condemning it as a plot to destroy Iran’s sovereignty and what was left of its hard-earned constitutional order. Even though anti-British sentiments

were not as intense as they were for the brutal tsarist aggression in Tabriz and elsewhere in northern Iran, it was intense enough to leave a lasting imprint on the Iranian collective memory. The temporary withdrawal of the Bolshevik regime and voluntary abrogation of imperial concessions by the Russian revolutionary regime put Britain under even a more critical spotlight especially as it became the sole master on the Iranian stage. A long poem composed in 1919 by the fiery journalist and poet, Mirzadeh 'Eshqi, demonstrates a deepening suspicion for the British and their pernicious designs:

Hearing the name of the fatherland's foe, is enough for my heart to bleed,
 If it faces that vicious opponent, what then it will do? . . .
 Britain and Iran, it is the story of cat and mouse,
 If the cat captures the mouse, does it ever let go?
 Even if we assume ourselves a lion, our foe is the quintessential fox,
 It is proverbial how fox deceives the lion . . .
 In my conscience, I am accountable toward history, and if I remain silent,
 I will be answerable to posterity.
 Otherwise, I know that in the feelings of this impervious [Iranian] race,
 My words neither will instill nor extort any sense.³³

Such feelings of romantic despair could only be intensified with the coup of March 1921, which brought into the limelight the Anglophile Sayyed Zia al-Din Tabataba'i, known for his strong Anglophile tendency. Yet it was the rise to power of Reza Khan Sardar Sepah that gave some Iranian nationalists—and conspiratorial theorists of the next generation—the largely unjustified impression that the strongman of Iran is nothing but a British cypher.

Farrokhi Yazdi, a passionate poet and journalist of the period, who like 'Eshqi eventually fell victim of Reza Khan's police apparatus, composed a poem about the 1919 agreement and its aftermath. Written shortly after the 1921 coup, when the consequences of the upheavals that led to the rise of the first Pahlavi shah was not yet fully clear, Farrokhi's tone anticipated the nationalist defiance that heightened a quarter-century later:

So long that there is precious soul in my body,
 Let my head be fallen for the cause of the fatherland . . .
 After causing Iran countless seditions and anarchy,
 Why in London,
 Lord Curzon is outraged,
 And began airing vain threats? . . .
 Please my lord let us live our lives,
 The county of Jamshid cannot be colonized.³⁴

Later on, during the Second World War, these patriotic lamentations were to be heard with greater frequency though not with the same sentimental innocence. Britain's jealous safeguarding of its geopolitical and economic interests at the expense of denying the Iranian national demands helped further tarnish its image in the discourse of Iranian nationalism. It earned the unenviable status of Iran's prime enemy during the oil nationalization movement. The Iranian public had already witnessed how Britain in pursuit of its military objectives brought about the forced

abdication of Reza Shah in 1941 to be followed by the Allied occupation of Iran together with the Soviet Union and the United States. Even more than the Anglo-Russian occupation during the First World War, the memories of the Second World War turned the majority of Iranians against British hegemonic designs—a tendency soon after the war to be shared among the nationalists, members, and sympathizers of the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party and the Islamic extremists of the Fada'iyān-e Islam.

Suspicion toward Britain and fear of its real or imagined power gained momentum, and wider popular acceptance, with anti-British propaganda in the thriving populist press of the postwar era and its portrayal of Britain in cartoons, satirical poems, and editorials as the master hatcher of sinister schemes and the hidden hand behind its subservient “lackeys” (*nowkar*) of British masters. Ranging from Hasan Vosuq al-Dawla, the premier who facilitated the 1919 agreement, and Sayyid Zi'a al-Din Tabataba'i, the pro-British premier of the 1921 coup, to independent politicians such Ahmad Qavam and Hasan Taqizadeh and tribal chiefs of the Qashqa'i tribe, accusations of sell out to Britain colonial ambitions were rife and often highly damaging.

No doubt Britain's greater reliance on proxies to influence Iranian national politics greatly contributed to postwar popular anti-British sentiments. The realities of the Cold War era, the diplomatic and financial constraints, and prevalence of anticolonial independent movements from India to North Africa persuaded the European colonial empires, Britain being chief among them, to resort to an indirect course of action, subterfuge, and skullduggery. This was best characterized during nationalization of the Iranian oil industry after 1951 under the leadership of Mohammad Mosaddeq: a daring attempt only at par with the struggle for independence in India and its success four years earlier. Economic sovereignty for Iranians and the end to the operation of the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company came to be seen as the ultimate national aspiration and a unifying force in an otherwise fractured polity. The bitter dispute that led to direct confrontation with the British government and subsequently the much-lamented Anglo-American sponsored coup of August 1953 turned Britain into a primal Other comparable to the ancient *aniran* of the *Shahnameh* but with capabilities never arrogated to any power, not even to the Turanids.

By the late 1950s, in the post-Mosaddeq era, the Iranian experience of half a century of British overt intervention and covert machination invoked disdain or despair. That is best characterized in the popularity of conspiratorial theories of history and politics. The fertile imagination of some statesmen, popular historians, journalists, and whoever fancied to dabble in the discourse of esoteric politics and behind-the-scenes hidden hands, began to attribute to the British voodoo-like abilities to stir political trouble and advance its objectives at all levels and with all possible means. Such a conspiratorial cult, preserved in popularized historical writings of Mahmud Mahmud, Khan Malek Sasani, Husayn Makki, and Isma'il Ra'in from the 1930s to the 1970s, and even more in the unwritten popular perceptions of Iran's high politics, imagined British hands at every turn. Even Mohammad Reza Shah and members of Iran's inner political circles were not immune to Anglophobic perceptions. They too were unsettled by the possibility of the English and their subordinates employing their vast resources against them behind closed doors of the Foreign Office and the British Intelligence Services. They too detected an extensive network of pensioners, spies, collaborators, sympathizers, and secret societies and

saw the whole community of religious minorities devoted to British interests. In this widespread, well-disciplined, well-financed, and unassailable imagined scheme, there was not only an enemy outside but an enemy within lurking in the shadow for a moment of opportunity. Upon this often faceless and hazy enemy thus was heaped blame for political failures, economic mistakes, and social unrest.

Remarkably, at the two poles of this spectrum of presumed British control over domestic puppets stood the two diametrically opposed communities of the Baha'is and the clerical Shi'i establishment. They were each tied up, in the estimation of one group or another, to some sinister but ambiguous British colonial designs. From the 1930s, and more vividly during the repressive political climate of the 1960s and 1970s, a new "creation narrative" of the origins of the Baha'i faith began to flourish among the Islamic activist circles and therefrom among the urban middle classes with religious sentiments. The "Memoirs" (*Khaterat*) of Kinyaz Dalgruki, an unscrupulous piece of historical forgery that was attributed to a composite Russian envoy to the Qajar court, was at the center of these conspiratorial accusations. The Russian envoy not only recruited Sayyed 'Ali Mohammad Shirazi, the Bab, through his first convert, Mulla Hosain boshru'i, but recruited Bahau'llah to serve as a Russian agent with the task of conspiring against the Shi'i community and realizing Russian imperialist objectives in Iran. Despite its frivolous banality, obvious to an informed reader, the "Memoirs" possessed all the elements of conspiratorial intrigue dear to a readership in search of sinister truth behind the façade of Baha'i morality. Even more appealing in this cloak-and-dagger narrative was the claim of the presumed author of the "Memoirs" that at the end of the day, when Russians found the Baha'is of no further use for their own ends, they passed them along to the British, so they continued serving the colonial ambitions of their new masters.

In another conspiratorial scheme, the Shi'i *mojtaheds* too were not immune to charges of pro-British tendencies. One prevalent narrative implicated the recipients of the Audh Bequest as being subservient to Britain because the British consulate in Baghdad took over the task of distributing the bequest on behalf of the debunked Indian principality that first endowed it. The Audh Bequest, among Iranians known as "Indian money" (*pul-e Hend*), was a charity endowment established in the early nineteenth century by a female member of the Shi'i ruling family of the Audh kingdom in Lucknow, India, for the upkeep of the Shi'i scholars in Najaf and Karbala. Any major figure among the *mojtahed* families residing in southern Iraq whose name appeared on the consulate's list of recipients of the bequest (and in due course others with no connection to it) thus could be labeled by their critics as being "on the British payroll" even though there was little evidence—if any—that the distribution of the fund served any political purpose favorable to the British interests. Among recipients at the turn of the twentieth century were such prominent figures as the aforementioned Mulla Kazem Khorasani and Shaykh 'Abdollah Mazandarani, both known for their support of the Constitutional Revolution and Iran's sovereignty and independence of foreign influences.

In due course even connection to "Indian money" was no longer essential for charges of British collaboration especially during and after the British Mandate in Iraq. Even the fierce political activist Shaykh Mohammad Khalesizadeh, a *mojtahed* from Iraq whose vocal opposition to Reza Shah and involvement in anti-Baha'i campaigns led to years of exile, was accused of pro-British sentiments on the grounds of his support for the well-known anglophile Sayyed Zi' al-Din Tabataba'i

and for his unsuccessful bid for return to power during and after the Second World War. Sayyed Abu'l-Qasem Kashani, too, did not remain untouched by charges of pro-British sentiments especially after his break with Mosaddeq and the National Front. The indiscriminate stamp of subservience to British interests remained a feature of anticlerical trends during the 1940s and 1950s. They were often indicative of secular nationalists' ambivalence toward clerical place in political affairs and the conservative social agenda they promoted.

The Islamic Revolution of 1979 helped reverberate allegations of British conspiracy and clerical collaboration among many members of the religious and secular Iranian middle class. The cynical joke that under the beard of mullahs, Khomeini included, there is a "made in Britain" label pointed at the prominence of Britain as the chief conspirer within a plethora of conspiracy theories that popped up at the time of the revolution and after. The extensive coverage by the BBC Persian of the Islamic Revolution and of the prominent place of Khomeini and popular forces behind him offered a powerful boost to such theories. Financed by the British Foreign Office (as part of the BBC World Service), the coverage gave the impression to many Iranian observers, and the Iranian secular public as a whole, that BBC's coverage is part of a larger British agenda to topple the Pahlavi dynasty and bring instead the Islamic regime to power. Similar to the fall of the Mosaddeq government in 1953, it was argued, the British government and its propaganda mouthpiece, the BBC, this time aimed at the downfall of the Shah because of the independent course that he initiated contrary to British vested interests. The revolution thus was viewed as a process that served British interests, especially in the Iranian oil industry, by facilitating the takeover of the obedient clerical element. Preposterous though it was, theories such as this always served not only to implicate the clerical activists as agents of foreign powers, but more importantly, to offer a perceivable frame of reference for the catastrophic course of the revolution and the entirely unpredictable rise of the clerical class to power.

CONCLUSION

For over two centuries of diplomatic, commercial, and cultural encounters, the interplay of fear and fascination never disappeared from the Anglo-Iranian landscape. The more Iranians came to stereotype the English as smart, powerful, and calculative, at least in the conduct of their foreign policy, the more they perceived themselves as victimized, deceived, and politically doomed. The binary of the strong versus the weak, no doubt, reflected the political realities of that imperial age: realities that by the early twentieth century came to generate in Iranian minds greater Anglophobic anxieties. The British "hidden hand" (*dast-e penhan*) was to be seen at every turn, every setback, and every political misfortune. Invariably, this mode of imagining came at the expense of grasping historical realities and of allowing room for self-criticism. The English thus acquired in popular imagination almost supernatural powers to influence and intrigue, promote and depose, and manipulate the elite and the masses alike.

At a deeper level, suspicion toward Britain is to be understood as a new phase in Iranian cultural differentiation between its own vulnerable Self versus a threatening Other. Just as the British defined their own national identity versus the French across what they call the "English" Channel, the Iranians sought the British colonial

presence as their ultimate modern Other against whom they partially articulated their conscious nationalist identity. This of course was before the arrival of the Americans on the Iranian scene and Ayatollah Khomeini's labeling of the United States as the Great Satan, a new foreign enemy that shifted the focus of Othering to a new superpower.³⁵

Despite all this, however, the Iranians after all didn't do that badly in receiving the *Farangis'* enticing gifts without succumbing to their hegemonic powers. Using Rostam al-Hokama's farcical parable, it is fair to suggest that Iran's "untamable mule" never fully succumbed to the "smart ploys" of *Farang*. It surely felt inferior to its material means, was fascinated by its military might, adopted its material culture, and emulated its ways. Yet it could be argued that by resorting to its stereotypical skeptic psyche (*tab'-e rendaneh*), Iran remained, culturally at least, in a medial space between its old Self and the marvels of *Farang's* Other almost in the same fashion that for more than a century in the Qajar era it politically survived as a buffer state without ever really admitting it.

NOTES

1. *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth Centuries*, ed. H. G. Chick (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1939), I: 248–55, cited in W. McNeill and M. R. Waldman, eds., *The Islamic World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973).
2. Register book, MS no. 5032, Library of Majlis Shura-ye Melli (now Majlis Shura-ye Islami), cited in 'A. Nava'i, *Iran va Jahan az Moghol ta Qajariyeh*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Homa, AH 1366/1987), I:241.
3. Nava'i, *Iran va Jahan*, I:243–44.
4. J. Malcolm, *Persian Sketches* (London: John Murray, 1845), 213–15.
5. H. Jones, *An Account of the Transactions of the Majesty's Mission in the Court of Persia* (London: James Bohn, 1834), 300–301.
6. *The Dynasty of the Kajars Translated from the Original Persian Manuscript Presented by His Majesty Faty Aly Shah to Sir Harford Jones Brydges* (London: James Bohn, 1833) 107–15.
7. 'Abd al-Razzaq Donboli (Maftun), *Ma'athir-i Sultaniyya* (Tabriz: n.p., AH 1241/1825), 60.
8. Mohammad Hashem Asaf, Rostam al-Hokama, *Rostam al-Tawarikh*, ed. M. Moshiri (Tehran: Amir Kabir, AH 1348/1969), 382–91. For further details about the author and his views see A. Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989; 2nd ed. Los Angeles, CA: Kalimat Press, 2005) 89–93.
9. Rostam al-Hokama, *Rostam al-Tavarikh*, 383.
10. A. Amanat, "Russian Intrusion into the Guarded Domain': Reflections of a Qajar Statesman on European Expansion" *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, no. 113 (1993): 35–56 (38).
11. A. Amanat, "'Pishva-ye ommat' va vazir mokhtar-e bi-tadlis-e Engelis: morasaleh-e Hajj Sayyed Mohammad Baqer Shafti Hojjat al-Eslam va ser John McNeill dar qaziya-ye lashkarkeshi-ye Mohammad Shah be Harat," *Iranshenasi*, no. 2 (AH 1369/1990): 11–41 (18).
12. A. Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831–1896* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 265.
13. Granting of protégé status (*taht al-hemayegi*) was distinct from becoming official employees in the British service. As early as the turn of the nineteenth century certain people,

both from Muslim and non-Muslim families, were employed by British legations and consulates and recognized as agents ('*ommal*) for such functions as secretaries, interpreters, and reporters, generally known as "news writers" (*khabar-nevis*). These employments were seldom questioned or suspected by the Iranian authorities.

14. See Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, 157–99. The publication of the petition in question in my *Pivot of the Universe* and its Persian translation (*Qebleh-ye 'Alam: Naser al-Din Shah Qajar va Padeshahi-ye Iran*, trans. H. Kasmshad [Tehran: Nashr-e Karnameh, AH 1383/2004]) has caused a ceaseless consternation among pseudo-historians and cultural commissars of the Islamic Republic. They viewed it as an act of betrayal to the pristine image of their fallen hero and an irremovable blot in the otherwise unblemished martyrology of the current regime. What remained unacknowledged in their myopic reading of a historical document, however, was the detailed analysis in the book of how Amir Kabir fell victim to the British representative's deliberate disregard for his petition and its fatal outcome.
15. Mir 'Abd al-Latif Shushtari, *Tohfāt al-'Ālam*, ed. S. Movahhid (Tehran: Tahuri, AH 1363/1982), 270.
16. *Ibid.*, 271.
17. *Ibid.*, 275.
18. Mirza Abu-Taleb Khan Isfahani, *Masir-e Talebi*, ed. H. Khadiv-jam (Tehran, AH 1352/1973), 231.
19. *Ibid.*, 232.
20. Abu'l Hasan Khan Ilchi, *Hayrat Nameh*, ed. H. Morselvand (Tehran, 1364/1985), 162–63. For a review of this faulty edition and editor's omissions, see A. Amanat, "The Study of History in Post-Revolutionary Iran: Nostalgia, Illusion, or Historical Awareness?" *Iranian Studies*, no. 20 (1989): 3–18 (14–15). For an abridged translation of Ilchi's travel see *A Persian at the Court of King George, 1809–10: the Journal of Mirza Abul Hasan Khan*, trans. Margaret Morris Cloake (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1988). See also D. Wright, *The Persians among the English: Episodes in Anglo-Persian History* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1986).
21. *Ibid.*, 162–63.
22. Mirza Saleh, *Majmu'eh-yi Safarnamāhā-yi Mirza Saleh Shirazi* (Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, AH 1364/1985), 164.
23. Mirza Shaykh E'tesam al-Din, *Shigurfnamāh i Vela'it, or, Excellent intelligence concerning Europe: being the travels of Mirza Itesa Modeen in Great Britain and France*, trans. from the original Persian manuscript into Hindustani, with an English version and notes, by James Edward Alexander (London: n.p., 1827).
24. See N. Green, "Journeymen, Middlemen: Travel, Transculture, and Technology in the Origins of Muslim Printing," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 2 (2009): 203–24.
25. London *Times* no. 1192, signed by Mahomed Saulit (Mohammad Saleh Shirazi?), no. 25, Great Coram Street, London. It is dated July 8, 1823.
26. For Shafti's correspondence with John McNeill see Amanat, "Pishva-yi Ummat," 11–41.
27. *Resalāhā-ye Mirza Malkom Khan Nazem al-Dawleh*, ed. H. Asil (Tehran: AH 1381/2002), 25–27.
28. "Lawh-e Malakheh-ye Victoria" Baha'ullah, *Asar-e Qalam-e A'la: Alvah-e Nazeleh Khetab be Moluk va Ro'asa-ye Arz* (Mo'asseseh-ye Melli-ye Matbu'at-e Amri, 1124 Badi'/1968), 129–41 (132–33); English translation: *The Proclamations of Baha'ullah to the Kings and Rulers of the World* (Haifa: Baha'i World Center, 1967), 34. Also cited in "Baha'i Faith," <http://eblog.blogspot.com/2008/02/bahauallahs-tablet-to-queen-victoria.html>.
29. Sharif Kashani, *Tarikh-e Sharifi*, published as *Vaqe'at-e Ettifaqiya-ye Rozegar*, ed. M. Nezam-Mafi and S. Sa'dvandian, 3 vols. (Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, AH 1362/1983), 1:98.

30. *Al-Jamal*, Sha'ban 3, 1325 / Sep. 11, 1907, cited in I. Yaqma'i, *Shahid-e Rah-e Azadi Sayyed Jamal al-Din Isfahani (Shahid)* (Tehran: Intesharat-e Tus, AH 2536/1978), 181.
31. *Asnadi dar Bareh-ye Hojum-e Engelis va Rus be Iran (1278–1291 Hajri Shamsi)*, ed. M. Torkaman (Tehran, AH 1370/1991), no. 26, 271.
32. E. G. Browne, *The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 353–57.
33. *Kolliyat-e Musavvar-e 'Eshqi*, ed. 'A. A. Moshir-Salimi (Tehran: Daftar-e Motale'at Siyasi va Bayn al-Melali, AH 1370/1991), 334–35.
34. *Divan-e Farrokhi-ye Yazdi*, ed. H. Makki (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1357).
35. See A. Amanat, "Khomeini's Great Satan: Demonizing the American Other in the Islamic Revolution in Iran," *Apocalyptic Islam and Iranian Shi'ism* (London, I. B. Tauris, 2009), 199–220.

CHAPTER 7

BRITISH IMPERIALISM, REGIONALISM, AND NATIONALISM IN IRAN, 1890–1919

H. LYMAN STEBBINS

OF THE MANY SINISTER FORCES PURPORTEDLY MENACING Iran, the one considered most malevolent has long been perfidious Albion, Great Britain. That British and Russian imperialism contributed greatly to the formation of Iranian nationalism is almost axiomatic. Much recent scholarship has, to quote Peter Sahlins, viewed national identity as “contingent and relational . . . defined by the social or territorial boundaries drawn to distinguish the collective self and its implicit negation, the other.”¹ As Britain was undoubtedly such an “other,” against which Iranian identity coalesced, a better understanding of British imperialism in Iran, particularly in its regional, southern context, might enhance our appreciation of the way in which Iranian nationalism developed in the late Qajar period.

Scholars of Anglo-Iranian relations have focused mainly on diplomatic circles in London, St. Petersburg, and Tehran, and conspiracy theorists have generally followed their lead.² Both tend to overlook the central fact about British imperialism in late Qajar Iran: its political, economic, and military center of gravity was not Tehran but the south, especially along the Persian Gulf littoral. In the 1890s, faced with Russia’s growing power in the north and the increasing inability of the central government in Tehran to maintain its authority in the south, the British expanded their consular presence in the region and turned to local notables, especially large

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landholders and tribal leaders, to secure their interests. The government of India played a leading role in this effort. With its imposing terrain, sparse population, ethnolinguistic diversity, and semiautonomous nomads, the south possessed natural barriers to the kind of political and cultural integration desired by many Iranian nationalists. British policy perpetuated regional differences and often reinforced the power of traditional and autocratic elites. Furthermore, British imperialism in Iran not only promoted regionalism in terms of north and south but also encouraged regionalism within the south itself. The British, nonetheless, found the management of these myriad local interests difficult and eventually impossible, especially in Fars during the Constitutional Revolution and the First World War. They responded with direct military and financial intervention, which in turn provoked armed resistance by various self-proclaimed "nationalists," *ulama*, and tribes, who were, for a time, united against a common, foreign enemy. While indicative of a nascent sense of national identity, this fragile coalition did not long survive its internal divisions. Although Iranian nationalists succeeded in defeating the Anglo-Iranian Treaty of 1919, they would, in the future, fail to resolve the problem of regional particularism. It would prove easier to articulate Iranian identity vis-à-vis the external "other" than the "other" within.

IMPERIALISM

Britain's imperial presence in southern Iran was inextricably linked to the strategic security of its Indian Empire. Before the consolidation of Britain's oil interests in the first decades of the twentieth century, an overwhelming concern of what Robinson and Gallagher famously called "the official mind of imperialism" was the preservation of the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran as friendly buffer states against Russian expansion toward the frontiers of India.³ Indeed, the term *Middle East* was popularized precisely in this strategic sense.⁴ When, by 1890, Russian supremacy in northern Iran could no longer be denied, British statesmen became determined to consolidate Britain's political and commercial influence in the south by means of an expanded consular network. Combining diplomatic, commercial, and political functions, the consul was an ideal agent of "informal imperialism."⁵ Between 1889 and 1921, the number of British consular posts in Iran rose from 3 to 24.⁶ This strategy coincided with the decline of Qajar authority and the increasing fragmentation of political power in the region. In these circumstances, the British sought the allegiance and support of local notables, the *de facto* guarantors of peace and stability.

British representation in Iran was divided between the British Foreign Office and the Indian Foreign Department by a cumbersome arrangement known as "the dual control." India appointed most of the new southern consuls: Kerman (established 1894), Sistan (1898), Bandar-e 'Abbas (1900), Ahvaz (1904), Kermanshah (1905), Birjand (1907), and Bandar-e Lengeh (1910).⁷ With the exception of Sistan and Birjand, these posts, together with the Foreign Office consulates at Mohammerah⁸ (1890) and Shiraz (1903), were placed under the jurisdiction of the Political Resident in the Persian Gulf/Consul-General for Fars and Khuzestan at Bushehr, whom Lord George Curzon memorably dubbed the "Uncrowned King of the Persian Gulf."⁹ India also provided much of the personnel, money, and when necessary military force in southern Iran, and in this context, it is appropriate to

view India as an imperial center with its own periphery.¹⁰ The region was becoming one of the Indian Empire's frontier zones.

As viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905, Curzon was the central figure in the expansion of the consular network in southern Iran. Unlike their Foreign Office colleagues, the officers of the Indian Foreign Department he appointed to these posts generally held military rank. As Lieutenant-Colonel Percy Cox, Curzon's foremost protégé and consul-general/resident at Bushehr for much of the first two decades of the twentieth century, explained to the director of the Gulf customs in October 1905,

Then again, owing to the eccentricities of our system under which we are liable to revert to the Military Department, we remain Military; but though the Government of India officers who come here are originally soldiers, they are also trained officers of the Political Department. Trained in a rougher school, if you please, than officers of the Home Department, but still not altogether untrained. Take my case for instance—I have been doing Political work for 16 years, out of which I have passed 10 in Consular posts, so that most of the fire-eating element of the soldier should be eliminated by now, or at all events subdued!¹¹

The arrangement, however, had its critics. Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, *chargé d'affaires* at Tehran, remarked confidentially to Sir Eric Barrington, Lord Salisbury's private secretary, in July 1900, "The system of appointing military officers here is a difficult one to understand as their work is not military and if it were, our policy must be very different to our professions. That is one of the main difficulties when one tries to point out to the Persian Govt. that H.M.G. have no desire whatever to annex territory—and have interests here entirely friendly and mainly commercial."¹²

Within India, moreover, the political officers of the Foreign Department typically served as "residents" and "political agents" at the courts of the princes of the native states.¹³ After the Mutiny of 1857, British imperial ideology came to equate "the stability of the Indian Empire" with the preservation, cooperation, and loyalty of the "native aristocracy of the country."¹⁴ Curzon was especially committed to this project. Political officers functioned as intermediaries between the government of India, as "Paramount Power," and the native princes, providing "advice" to these rulers and reporting on conditions in their states. In what they deemed instances of blatant misgovernment or of a minority ruler, political officers often temporarily took over direct administration of the state. That men of this training and temperament were employed in southern Iran had profound consequences for the relationships between local notables and the shah's government in Tehran.

Iran's central government during the nineteenth century was relatively weak, the country vast, political power decentralized, and regional and tribal autonomy common. The Qajar state, lacking significant powers of military or bureaucratic compulsion, was constructed upon a consensus between the shah and local elites, such as landholders, tribal chiefs, urban notables, ulama, and prominent merchants.¹⁵ Local notables performed vital state functions such as revenue collection and provision of men for military service, and generally mediated between the central government and its subjects.¹⁶ The persistence of local power structures loyal to the shah provided provincial stability, while the shah's influence, in turn, was deployed in support of these local hierarchies. Royal endorsement in the form of

offices, titles, and honors enhanced the local notables' prestige. In his capacity as supreme arbiter, the shah endeavored to maintain a balance between rival interests to ensure public tranquility. When it came to exerting control over these peripheral forces, the shah employed various methods befitting his arbitral position: negotiation, reconciliation, manipulation, intrigue, as well as "symbolic punishments and rewards."¹⁷

Notions of traditional Irano-Islamic justice and the reliance of the Qajar state on local elites, however, privileged an idealized *status quo*, which by the 1890s was in very real danger of disintegration. Throughout the nineteenth century, Iran's weakness relative to Russia and Great Britain had demonstrated the need for military and financial reforms, both of which required a stronger, more centralized state.¹⁸ In the end, however, reform efforts were undercut by antagonistic vested interests, political factions, corruption, insufficient resources, as well as the ambivalence and irresolution of Naser al-Din Shah himself.¹⁹ In the decade following his death in 1896, repeated budget deficits resulted in the sale of further concessions to foreigners and ultimately the need to borrow money from Britain and Russia, both of which provoked considerable domestic opposition and led to charges that the shah was tyrannical and imperiling the realm and Islam. This growing popular resentment, together with suspicion of the government's attempts at centralization and the contempt born of its incompetence, seriously eroded the confidence of many local leaders in the Qajar state. In southern Iran, the result was a growing sense among the more powerful notables that their interests might no longer be compatible with strict loyalty to the shah.

Drawing on their experience in India and the political conditions in southern Iran, British consuls understood that the cooperation, and even the co-optation, of local notables, was essential to the defense of Britain's interests in terms of both resisting Russia and ensuring security for trade. Indeed, the power of local notables in the Iranian political system and the growing weakness of the central government were key factors in the selection of the consular officer as the instrument of British influence. The British did not seek to subvert the central government's authority in southern Iran, but existing political circumstances made it likely that, in pursuing their imperial interests, the consuls would find provincial leaders more useful than the central government. British policy thus increasingly entailed the consuls taking up the arbitral position hitherto reserved to the shah and his officials, adjudicating between competing interests and also between the notables and the central government.²⁰ In exploiting local power structures, British consuls insinuated themselves into the Qajar political system. By exacerbating the centrifugal tendencies within the Qajar state, British consuls helped to bring the Iranian and Indian peripheries into dynamic relationship with each other. Nominal Iranian sovereignty was maintained, but consuls were busy negotiating its limits with reference to Britain's imperial interests.

Iranian political elites generally viewed this important development in terms of their own interests in office, land, and in some cases, tribal power. While they undoubtedly shared a sense of Iranian cultural identity, their reactions to Britain's growing involvement in their affairs indicated that the growth of nationalism among the political classes was a gradual and uneven process.²¹ This situation explains the high incidence of collaboration between southern Iranian notables and British officials. Collaboration increased in the years preceding the Constitutional Revolution

and was a function of both the expansion of British representation in the region and the mounting skepticism of many notables about the future of the Qajar political system. While recognizing British officials as representatives of a foreign power, many of the elite understood that they performed useful political functions, notably patronage, mediation, and occasionally protection. In addition to cash payments and gifts, patronage meant access to the profits attending British economic investment. Shaykh Khaz'al Khan of Mohammerah and the Bakhtiari Khans obtained financial interests in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) as well as the trade route linking the Karun River with Isfahan.²² These agreements were almost invariably negotiated by British consular and diplomatic personnel, and the resulting income enhanced the local power and prestige of the recipients. Shaykh Khaz'al Khan, the Bakhtiari Khans, Qavam al-Molk in Fars, and the Khozaymeh family in Sistan and Qa'inat among others regularly sought British intercession with the shah and his ministers.²³ This frequent recourse to foreign assistance demonstrated that these provincial leaders no longer considered the old channels of mediation viable. These men, moreover, were not powerless in the face of British pressure. They understood that, like the shah, the British possessed limited powers of compulsion in southern Iran, especially beyond the coast, and used their own extensive political experience and abilities to maneuver amid the demands of Tehran and India.

The reactions of the popular classes to Britain's increasing visibility in the south were more ambivalent. The Tobacco Protests of 1891–92 revealed that many "ulama, modernists, merchants, and ordinary townspeople" considered the granting to foreigners of a monopoly concession on an article of everyday production, trade, and consumption to be an economic, religious, and political outrage.²⁴ A less well-known but more common flashpoint was British involvement in the grain trade. Under normal conditions, a surplus of grain was available for export from the southern ports, but in times of scarcity, export further reduced supply for local consumption and increased prices. The Iranian government often imposed temporary embargoes on grain export, but the association of foreign merchants with dearth and distress naturally provoked popular resentment in a country that had experienced a devastating famine a generation earlier. In 1895, Iranian soldiers, typically underpaid and underfed, assaulted Lynch Brothers' employees in Ahvaz while searching one of the company's river steamers for contraband grain.²⁵ Poor rainfall in January 1897 occasioned anti-British riots in Bushehr and Shushtar.²⁶ In June 1903, a crowd in Zabol threatened Indian merchants, who were purchasing grain for the Sistan Boundary Commission, which was headed by Colonel A. H. McMahon and charged with adjudicating an Irano-Afghan frontier dispute.²⁷ The demonstrators accused the Indian merchants of burning surplus grain to maintain high prices and demanded the expulsion of the commission and all British and Indian troops from Sistan. With the exception of the incident at Ahvaz, mullahs and *sayyeds* played leading roles in these demonstrations.

Even after these difficulties, however, popular attitudes toward the British were at times positive. During this period, thousands of Iranians, including many poor, availed themselves of free medical care at charitable dispensaries attached to British consulates and staffed in the south by the Indian Medical Service.²⁸ The great constitutional *bast* at the British legation in the summer of 1906 showed that Tehranis of various occupations and social standing momentarily regarded the British as allies against tyranny, royal and Russian. It has been remarked that the capitulations and

foreign concessions alienated the mercantile classes from Qajar authority and the British.²⁹ British trade in the south, however, depended on the cooperation of Iranian merchants. Far from being excluded, many important Iranian merchants were heavily invested in the trade, serving as agents for British firms and providing essential distribution and retail services in the interior market towns. That British and Iranian merchants could work together for common interests was demonstrated in the spring of 1905, when they jointly and successfully opposed the implementation of the new *Règlement Douanier* promulgated by the Minister of Customs and Posts, Joseph Naus, which they considered obnoxious and arbitrary.³⁰

In Shiraz, the following year, opponents of the governor-general of Fars, Malek Mansur Mirza Sho'a' al-Saltaneh, a son of Mozaffar al-Din Shah, sought the intercession of Consul Thomas Grahame after their numerous petitions to Tehran against the prince's oppressive and avaricious rule had produced little result. For over a week in mid-June 1906, a crowd, which reportedly peaked at nearly a thousand Shirazis, took *bast* at the British consulate, an action that finally induced the Iranian government to announce a new governor-general and the return of various properties, notably the Bazaar-e Vakil, expropriated by the prince.³¹ When it was proclaimed that "the Shah had been graciously pleased to relinquish the Bazaar-i-Vakil [*sic*] and shops in favour of the people," Grahame noted with evident satisfaction that "one report says that a voice from the crowd cried out 'this is thanks to the British Consul.'"³²

REGIONALISM

The Iranian Constitutional Revolution and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 had significant consequences for Britain's position in southern Iran. The effect of both was to reinforce British officials' inclination to adopt distinct regional strategies tailored to local conditions; at the heart of each was an imperial concern for order. Regionalism was an explicit and fundamental element of the Anglo-Russian Convention, which recognized a Russian sphere of influence in northern Iran and divided the south into a British sphere and a neutral zone. Iranian nationalists denounced the agreement as a partition of their country. British officials quickly adjusted their priorities and policies to this new geostrategic environment, and as the neutral zone remained open to foreign political and economic influence, it received most of their attention. The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, however, complicated these efforts. Increasingly fearful that the revolution was causing "anarchy" in the neutral zone, the British attempted to consolidate the authority of traditional elites as bulwarks of order and stability. When this model proved unworkable in Fars, the British embarked on an ambitious program of state formation, built on military and fiscal control of the province. The Royal Navy, meanwhile, increasingly dominated the Gulf ports. Although regionalism had long been implicit in Britain's southern strategy, it reached its zenith between 1907 and 1915, guided by that classic maxim *divide et impera*.

The Anglo-Russian Convention altered the political and economic landscape of southern Iran. This vast region, which had been previously treated by Curzon and others as a strategic whole, was now divided into a British sphere and a neutral zone. Russian acknowledgment of British political supremacy in Afghanistan and southeastern Iran guaranteed the strategic security of the western flank of India.³³

Their political and commercial supremacy thus assured after 1907, the British were content to exercise only a loose ascendancy in their sphere and did little to consolidate their political or economic predominance there. This effectively relegated Sistan and southern Qa'inat to an imperial backwater, a fact acknowledged by the consul, Major W. F. T. O'Connor, to Viceroy Hardinge's private secretary in April 1912: "I regard with dismay the prospect of returning to such a place as Seistan [*sic*], where there is absolutely nothing to do."³⁴ Political life in Sistan and Qa'inat during this period was not without controversy or conflict, but Russia's repudiation of its ambitions there after 1907 substantially reduced for the British the importance of Khozaymeh family rivalries. O'Connor soon found more exciting employment in Shiraz, and the British devoted their resources to buttressing their political and economic position in the neutral zone. The convention had technically left this area open to all nations, but British officials remained determined to keep it free of all foreign influence, especially Russian and German.

Although initially sympathetic to the constitutional movement, British consuls in the south soon came to view the revolution as inimical to effective government and the security of British interests. In June 1908, Cox explained to the government of India that "in the South I confess I have seen no result from the national movement and the attempt at constitutional government which has been otherwise than subversive of law and order and generally paralysing both to the administration and to commerce."³⁵ What Cox and his colleagues feared was not so much the decline of the central state but the erosion of the local political order upon which practical authority had come to devolve and upon which British interests in turn depended. They did not necessarily equate "anarchy" with a weak central state or with tribalism as such but instead with the breakdown of traditional patterns of local governance. It was important for the British, therefore, to maintain those elites of proven administrative ability and friendship.

The exigencies of the Anglo-Russian Convention and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution thus drew the British into even closer connections with Shaykh Khaz'al and the Bakhtiyari Khans. "It seems to me," Cox declared to the government of India in March 1908, "that having by the terms of our convention with Russia left the region affected in the neutral zone and exposed to German enterprise, it is of the utmost importance to our interests to counteract the disadvantage of that circumstance as far as possible and without delay by strengthening our hold as much as we can upon the Chiefs of South Western Persia before the opportunity to do so passes out of our control."³⁶ In a series of "assurances" to Shaykh Khaz'al between 1902 and 1914, the British government pledged to defend Arabestan against foreign attack, to support his autonomy vis-à-vis the central government, whether constitutionalist or royalist, and to extend these commitments to his male heirs.³⁷ In return, he followed British "advice" and entrusted the economic development of his territories to British firms, notably the APOC. Vice-Consul H. G. Chick confirmed the value of Shaykh Khaz'al's rule and cooperation in January 1910: "As regards the province of Arabistan [*sic*], the Customs figures and the quiet prevalent during this stormy period seem to be a vindication of the excellence of the Sheikh's [*sic*] tribal government as compared with the conspicuous failure of the Tehran authorities to maintain their influence in Fars both after and before the deposition of Mohammed Ali Shah [*sic*]."³⁸

British consuls also worked to preserve good relations between the Shaykh and his Bakhtiari neighbors, whose cooperation was essential to both the success of the APOC and the security of British trade along the Ahvaz-Isfahan road. When internal Bakhtiari squabbles threatened to disrupt the stability of northern Arabestan in 1912, British officials arranged for the appointment of Naser Khan Sardar Jang as *ilkhani* and pressed him to reach a *modus vivendi* with Shaykh Khaz'al.³⁹ This understanding took on additional importance after 1914, when the Royal Navy's transition to fuel oil prompted the British government to purchase a majority share in the APOC.⁴⁰ Arabestan and the Bakhtiari country, hitherto critical to Britain's regional position, had now by their connection with the Royal Navy, assumed a vital strategic significance for the entire British Empire.

In Fars and the Gulf ports, however, the strategy of co-opting local elites failed to contain the political instability attending the Constitutional Revolution. In contrast to the southwest, where Shaykh Khaz'al and the Bakhtiari Khans exercised a relatively uncontested supremacy in their domains, Fars was riven by numerous and well-armed contending political and tribal interests. Since the 1860s, Naser al-Din Shah had exploited the rivalry between the Khamsehs and the Qashqa'is, but as its authority in Fars declined, the Qajar state no longer exercised this essential arbitral function. The result was a period of sustained competition between Qavam al-Molk,⁴¹ *ilkhani* of the Khamseh, and Isma'il Khan Sowlat al-Dowleh, *ilkhani* of the Qashqa'i, for regional supremacy. Britain consistently supported Qavam al-Molk in this conflict, thereby earning the enduring enmity of Sowlat al-Dowleh and severely circumscribing its ability to assume a constructive mediational role in Fars. Qajar weakness and the struggle between Qavam al-Molk and Sowlat al-Dowleh, furthermore, diminished these great chiefs' control over their confederacies and intensified internal conflicts within them.⁴² This political fragmentation together with socio-economic dislocations accompanying foreign commercial expansion rendered the Bushehr-Shiraz-Isfahan road unsafe for British trade.⁴³ Especially disruptive was the systematic, illegal, and extortionate levy of *rahdari* (road guard tolls) on muleteers between Bushehr and Shiraz by various headmen such as Shaykh Husayn Khan Chahkutahi and Muhammad Khan Borazjani Ghazanfar al-Saltaneh. Their exactions severely dislocated commercial life in Fars and the Persian Gulf littoral and on several occasions led to the suspension of trade altogether. From the perspective of British interests in the neutral zone, the situation was unsatisfactory. Not only did British and Indian merchants sustain heavy losses, but more importantly, the obstruction of the southern trade routes afforded Russia an opportunity to extend its influence south, a contingency still viewed with great anxiety by British officials, especially Anglo-Indian ones.

After repeated appeals to the Iranian government, the British began to exert overt military power in Fars and the Gulf ports. Under considerable British pressure, the Iranian government agreed in late 1910, to establish a gendarmerie to protect the trade routes. The force was to be commanded by foreign officers, who soon turned out to be Swedes.⁴⁴ In the meantime, British consular escorts were increased substantially. Four squadrons of the 39th Central Indian Horse, totaling three hundred cavalry, landed at Bushehr in late 1911.⁴⁵ Two squadrons were dispatched to Shiraz, and one each was stationed at Bushehr and Isfahan. In January 1912, the Bushehr escort was further reinforced by 270 Indian infantry, effectively rendering the port an imperial garrison. Between 1910 and 1913, troops were landed twice each at

Bandar-e Lengeh and Bandar-e 'Abbas and once between the latter and Jask. The Royal Navy, meanwhile, practiced gunboat diplomacy with impunity. Operations were carried out against arms smugglers on the Makran coast and against pirates at Delvar, which was burnt to the ground by a British force in June 1913.

Britain's long-term interests required a functional administration in Fars. The financial distress of the province was acute. Through the first nine months of the Iranian financial year from 1912 to 1913, only 25,000 tomans (£4,500) of a projected annual provincial revenue of some 700,000 to 800,000 tomans (£127,200 to £145,500) had been collected.⁴⁶ In May 1912, Consul W. A. Smart in Shiraz suggested direct loans to the local authorities.⁴⁷ Over the next two years, the British and Indian governments advanced roughly £490,000 to the Iranian government, of which about £200,000 was specifically allocated to Fars to finance both the administration of Governor-General Hajj Mehdi Qoli Khan Hedayat Mokhber al-Saltaneh and the provincial detachment of the Swedish-officered Gendarmerie.⁴⁸ With such financial assistance also came a measure of financial control. The British minister, Sir Walter Townley, was anxious lest "pilfering ministers" get their hands on the funds, and Consul Smart warned that "much of the money will be wasted unless there be European control."⁴⁹ Gendarmerie expenditure was arranged in Tehran between the British legation and the Swedish commandant, Colonel H. O. Hjalmarson. In Fars, fiscal oversight was performed by the British consul. Major O'Connor, who took over the Shiraz post in December 1912, disbursed the funds to a Belgian official of the Treasury Department and worked with the latter to, as he later recalled, "have the money properly utilised and honestly expended."⁵⁰ These advances, moreover, had been secured on the southern customs receipts, and in consequence, Cox took an active role in the fiscal management of Bushehr and the Gulf ports.

NATIONALISM

The British, however, underestimated the resentment caused by their actions. British policy after the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was decisive in shaping the widespread perception of Britain as a grasping and treacherous bully with interests diametrically opposed to those of the Iranian "nation."⁵¹ The foregoing discussion, however, should make clear that Britain's imperial presence in southern Iran was hardly monolithic, being rather, a series of *ad hoc* local arrangements and expedients, including bilateral relations with local elites, spheres of influence, and direct military and fiscal intervention. These different modes of imperial control, moreover, helped to shape emerging provincial patterns of Iranian resistance and nationalism before and during the First World War. Nationalist opposition was, ironically perhaps, weakest in the British sphere, not only because of its geographical and cultural isolation, but also perhaps because the convention and the abandonment of Russian ambitions there allowed the British to assume a much more modest and inconspicuous posture. In Arabestan and the Bakhtiari country, the British maintained effective connections with Shaykh Khaz'al and the Khans who, although profiting tremendously from their imperial associations, continued to command local allegiance. The British were careful not to assert their preeminence in these regions too brazenly lest by undermining their protégés' influence, they impaired their own, and this façade of local legitimacy tended to shield the

British from threatening levels of local criticism. Conversely, consciousness of and resistance to the imperial "other" was strongest in Fars and Bushehr, where British methods were the most intrusive.

The composition of this anti-British movement in Fars would challenge later Pahlavi nationalist narratives, which stressed an unbridgeable divide between the interests of the "tribes" and the "nation."⁵² For a fleeting moment, the presence of foreign troops in Fars and the Bushehr hinterland united self-conscious "nationalists," *ulama*, and the tribes against a common foe. Haji Mirza 'Ali Aqa, the editor of the Bushehr newspaper *Mozaffari*, protested the landing of the 39th Central Indian Horse and was expelled from the port at Cox's urging.⁵³ The *ulama* organized boycotts against Indian troops in Bushehr and Shiraz.⁵⁴ Some tribesmen chose armed resistance against a foreign incursion that was clearly directed against their *rahdari* interests. In December 1911, roughly eight hundred Kashkulis attacked a detachment of the Shiraz escort near Kazerun, killing seven Indian cavalymen and briefly taking Consul Smart captive. Even more determined resistance was offered during World War I. The figure of Wilhelm Wassmuss, the so-called "German Lawrence," has loomed large in accounts of these events, and the British certainly blamed him for much of their misfortune.⁵⁵ In reality, Wassmuss relied on a diverse coalition of anti-British groups, which included "nationalist" members of the Democrat Party in Shiraz and Iranian Gendarmerie officers, typically of northern extraction, as well as the *ulama* and Dashti, Dashtestani, and Tangestani tribal leaders.⁵⁶

Confronted with an overt foreign threat, their program was sufficiently broad to include any person or group seeking to defend Iran and Islam against British aggression and oppression. The Bushehr correspondent of the Shiraz newspaper *Jam-e Jam* succinctly summarized it in October 1915, when he declared "Oh God! give us either death or independence!"⁵⁷ Protesting British violations of Iranian neutrality, Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Borazjani declared to Cox that "the Iranian nation, after the observance of piety, is a loving friend of its government and independence and avoids opposing its government," but he warned the consul-general, "If you persist in your warlike actions, it will become impossible to restrain the nation."⁵⁸ When his appeal was ignored, Borazjani issued a fatwa demanding a jihad against the British.⁵⁹ The movement was given further institutional form in November 1915 with the establishment of a "National Committee for the Protection of the Independence of Persia,"⁶⁰ which quickly seized control of Shiraz and arrested Consul O'Connor, whom the Gendarmerie handed over to Za'er Khezr Tangestani for imprisonment near Ahram. O'Connor later recalled that while he was being escorted out of Shiraz, the triumphant gendarmes lined the streets and cheered, "Down with England! Long live Persia!"⁶¹

The British responded by forming the South Persia Rifles, which was placed under the command of yet another experienced consul, Brigadier-General Sir Percy Sykes. The South Persia Rifles became a focal point of resistance to Great Britain.⁶² Successive Iranian cabinets refused to recognize it, and between May and July 1918, Sowlat al-Dowleh led the Qashqa'is against the force. This episode illustrates the shape and extent of Iranian nationalism and its relationship with British imperialism. British officials considered the campaign a nationalist insurrection. Viceroy Chelmsford warned London that the "situation is the more serious in that Soulet's [*sic*] rising appears to be definite expression of general nationalist resentment of our interference in Central Persia."⁶³ The Consul in Shiraz, Lieutenant-Colonel

Hugh Gough, subsequently claimed that the crisis resulted from “a genuine desire on the part of large numbers of Persians to see their country free from all foreign interference. However much the Persian patriot may be derided, still it is a fact that patriotism does exist in Persia.”⁶⁴ As evidence, he cited a letter from one of the Qashqa'i leaders, Ayaz Kikha Khan, *kalantar* of the Darrehshuri, which was one of the five major tribes of the Qashqa'i confederacy, to the *zabet* of Liravi in January 1918, in which the former rejoiced at the Russian withdrawal from the north and the “welcome news of the freedom of our country from the aggression of foreigners. We should wait and see what will be the wish of God.”⁶⁵

These remarks, however, require further explanation. The average Qashqa'i warrior who took arms against the South Persia Rifles almost surely considered himself a “patriot,” but his patriotism was local—a traditional feeling of loyalty to clan, tribe, and place. If he possessed an identity that transcended these concerns, it was not a national one but a religious one. The duty to defend Islam could readily mobilize popular resistance against the British, and Shi'i *ulama*, who had long played a central role in antiforeign demonstrations in Iran, were prominent once again in the fighting near Shiraz in 1918. Nationalism, by contrast, has been a modern ideology, initially grounded in a literate, urban elite, which has promoted a larger, “imagined”⁶⁶ political community that not only transcends but also tends over time to obliterate traditional, local loyalties. In linguistic terms, moreover, Iranian nationalism has been primarily, although not exclusively, a Persian-speaking (and reading) phenomenon. Turkic speaking, illiterate Qashqa'i nomads hardly meet this description, and as noted, they had their own material reasons for opposing the British. The immediate cause of the crisis was a violent confrontation between the South Persia Rifles and the Darrehshuri Qashqa'i in which women and children were allegedly killed.⁶⁷ The desire to expel a foreign, oppressive “other” encouraged but did not necessitate the formation of an Iranian national consciousness. The rapidity, furthermore, with which the Qashqa'i rising disintegrated following the exploitation of factions within its leadership confirms that even a sense of Qashqa'i identity, much less some incipient national solidarity, was not a dominating consideration among the tribesmen, many of whom proved willing to desert Sowlat al-Dowleh at the first opportunity.

The attitudes of Qashqa'i leaders, however, were more complicated.⁶⁸ Ayaz Kikha Khan, for example, was aware of events occurring elsewhere in Iran and was eager for the liberation of what he considered to be his country. The decision, nevertheless, of some other Qashqa'i leaders to collaborate with the British against Sowlat al-Dowleh indicated that even if they were conscious of a broader national identity, they subordinated it to their local political interests. The case of Sowlat al-Dowleh himself, moreover, is more interesting and, in the long term, more important. He understood that the South Persia Rifles constituted a standing threat to his power and ambitions in Fars. True, he had at times been on the British payroll, but neither party had any illusions that such agreements were anything more than mere conveniences. As a member of the Iranian elite, Sowlat al-Dowleh, however, was quite cognizant of broader contemporary political and ideological developments. Lois Beck observes,

He was an advocate of the constitution and favored ridding Iran of foreign interference and the despotic Shah, but he also understood that acting in the

name of nationalism provided him with the means of relation to other local communities—dissident merchants, religious authorities, landowners, urbanites, and the intelligentsia—with whom he needed ties in order to secure and maintain regional (as compared with the more narrow tribal) power. Isma'il Khan favored an Iranian nationalism that would incorporate considerable regional autonomy, and he supported the kind of central government that would delegate regional power to him.⁶⁹

Sowlat al-Dowleh framed his action in a national context. He consistently maintained that he was following the orders of the cabinet in Tehran. During the siege of Shiraz, Gough reported to India that Sowlat al-Dowleh taunted Qavam al-Molk, demanding he choose between the “English” and the “national party.”⁷⁰ He made similar overtures to 'Abd al-Hosayn Mirza Farman Farma, the governor-general of Fars.⁷¹ These appeals resonated in some quarters within the city as evidenced by the appearance of placards exhorting the populace to assist Sowlat al-Dowleh's “national” army. His public espousal of the “national cause” signified a strategy not only of obtaining local extratribal support against a foreign occupier but also of attracting wider backing from the national elite in Tehran and across the country. Iranian nationalism was not yet a mass ideology, but Sowlat al-Dowleh's appeal to it demonstrated that by the end of the First World War, it was becoming entrenched among sections of the country's elite and in the developing public sphere of urban, literate Iran. The Iranian “nation” was becoming a source of political legitimacy.

The First World War eventually rendered Britain's regional policy in southern Iran obsolete. The collapse of Russia after 1917 left a dangerous power vacuum in northern Iran and the Caucasus, which the British feared might be filled by hostile Ottoman, German, or Bolshevik influence. British victories in Iraq and Palestine, moreover, portended the creation of a British Empire in the Middle East, in which Iran, situated between these new territories and India, would play a pivotal role. In September 1918, Cox was appointed Special Commissioner in Tehran. His old patron Lord Curzon soon took charge of the Foreign Office, and together they were determined to solve the “Persian Question” once and for all. Curzon became convinced that Britain needed to adopt a comprehensive policy in Iran aimed at strengthening the central state. Cox agreed. Dismissing the old regional model, he maintained to Curzon that “it is impossible, I submit, to treat the several factors of the situation in water-tight compartments at this juncture and that they need to be considered from the point of a whole.”⁷² The resulting Anglo-Persian Treaty of 1919 provided British military and financial advisors to supervise the reconstruction of the Iranian state. As the treaty was effectively the Fars policy writ large, it unsurprisingly encountered an equally resolute opposition, which was able to mobilize “the Iranian nation” against the British imperial “other.”

This chapter has sought to describe the relationship between regional patterns of British imperialism in Iran and a developing sense of Iranian national identity during the late Qajar period. Hoping to forestall the Russians, British political officers of the Indian Foreign Department were appointed consuls throughout the south, where they attempted to secure local cooperation for Britain's strategic interests. In so doing, they affected the political balance between the Qajar center and its southern periphery. The strategy's flexibility and adaptability to local conditions encouraged imperial tendencies toward “divide and rule,” ironically also a favorite

Qajar tactic, which served to entrench local particularity.⁷³ When, however, these indirect means proved insufficient to defend British interests against the instability resulting from revolution and war, the temptation to use more direct imperial methods became irresistible. The use of force, in particular, encouraged a growing, but not yet mass, sense of Iranian identity, which transcended, but did not yet dissolve, strictly local affiliations, and was conceivably capacious to include anyone who might oppose the British. In the long term, the multifaceted nature of British imperialism in Iran left a dual legacy of a jealous regard for national sovereignty against any form of foreign control, coupled with an abiding suspicion that some members of the community were secretly collaborating with foreign powers.⁷⁴ Anxiety about British subversion is alive and well today. Nonetheless, during the Pahlavi period, the ideological exigencies of the new centralized state and its program of autocratic modernization increasingly circumscribed the definition of who and what constituted “the nation.”⁷⁵ Political subjugation and forced sedentarization of the tribes came to be considered essential to this project. In this respect, it is telling that two chiefs with such radically different attitudes toward British power as Shaykh Khaz'al Khan and Sowlat al-Dowleh both died in similarly unhappy circumstances under arrest in Tehran. Indeed, it appears that as the British menace receded, the nationalism of the Pahlavi regime found it had need for other “others.”

NOTES

1. Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 271; see also Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707–1837* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 5–6.
2. See, for example, Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864–1914: A Study in Imperialism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1968). Kazemzadeh does devote a chapter to southern Iran, but his account mostly concentrates on the diplomatic history of the center. See also William J. Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I* (London: Frank Cass, 1984); Ahmad Ashraf, “Conspiracy Theories,” in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982–), 6:137–48.
3. J. Gallagher and R. Robinson, *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism* (London: Macmillan, 1961). As its title suggests, this study examines the strategic importance of Britain's African empire with regard to India, but the “official mind of imperialism” was concerned with the Middle East for precisely the same reason.
4. The term was originally used by Alfred T. Mahan in 1902. See “Middle East,” *Oxford English Dictionary* (online edition, accessed April 1, 2008); see also Valentine Chirol, *The Middle Eastern Question or some Political Problems of Indian Defense* (London: J. Murray, 1903); Roger Adelson, *London and the Invention of the Middle East: Money, Power, and War, 1902–22* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 22–26.
5. Gallagher and Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade.” *Economic History Review*, second series vol. 6, no. 1 (1953), 1–15; see also Denis Wright, *The English among the Persians: Imperial Lives in Nineteenth-Century Iran* (London: I. B. Taurus, 1977; reprinted 2001), 75–93.
6. *The Foreign Office List and Diplomatic and Consular Yearbook for 1921* (London: 1921), 59–60. These figures do not include the temporary consulates at Astarabad, Torbat-e Haydariyeh, or Kuh-e Malek Siah.
7. The cost of maintaining the consulate at Kerman was shared equally between Indian and British governments. Percy Sykes, who was serving as the Consul at Kerman, established a temporary consulate in Sistan during a tour in 1898, which was made permanent in

1900. Kermanshah was originally an Indian post, but in 1909, it was transferred to the Foreign Office in exchange for the consulate at Mohammerah, which had hitherto been staffed by the Foreign Office. Both posts, however, remained under the resident/consul-general at Bushehr.
8. During this period, the present-day city of Khorramshahr was known as Mohammerah. While the name Khuzestan was then in use (Consul-General for Fars and Khuzestan), Arabestan was the more common appellation and will accordingly be used in this paper. I would like to thank H. E. Chehabi for his information and advice on this matter.
 9. George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1892), II:451.
 10. Thomas Metcalf, *Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 1–8; Robert J. Blyth, *The Empire of the Raj: India, East Africa, and the Middle East, 1858–1947* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1–36; and James Onley, *The Arabian Frontier of the British Raj: Merchants, Rulers, and the British in the Nineteenth-Century Gulf* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).
 11. Cox to Heynssens, October 8, 1905, enclosed in Cox to Grant-Duff, October 9, 1905, FO 248/844.
 12. Spring-Rice (private) to Barrington, July 24, 1900, FO 60/648 in *Documents on Persia 1899–1913* (University of Chicago Microfilms), reel 8.
 13. Ian Copland, “The Other Guardians: Ideology and Performance in the Indian Political Service,” in *People, Princes and Paramount Power: Society and Politics in the Indian Princely States*, ed. Robin Jeffrey (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1978), 275–86.
 14. Viceroy Lytton to Queen Victoria, May 4, 1876, as quoted in Bernard S. Cohen, “Representing Authority in Victorian India,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; reprinted 1992), 188; Robin J. Moore, “Imperial India, 1858–1914,” in *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. 3, *The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 431 and 437; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 43–57.
 15. Abbas Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe: Nasir al-Din Shah Qajar and the Iranian Monarchy, 1831–96* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 13.
 16. A. Reza Sheikholeslami, *The Structure of Central Authority in Qajar Iran, 1871–1896* (Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1977), 19; Vanessa Martin, *The Qajar Pact: Bargaining, Protest and the State in 19th Century Persia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005); Lois Beck, *The Qashqa’i of Iran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 98.
 17. Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, 5–6 and 13; also Ervand Abrahamian, “Oriental Despotism: the case of Qajar Iran,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5, no. 1 (January 1974): 9–31.
 18. Shaul Bakhash, *Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy & Reform under the Qajars, 1858–96* (London: Ithaca Press for the Middle East Centre, St. Anthony’s College, 1978).
 19. Ehsan Yarshater, “Observations on Nasir al-Din Shah,” in *Qajar Iran: Political, Social, and Cultural Change, 1800–1925*, ed. Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983; reprint: Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1992), 7; Amanat, *Pivot of the Universe*, 424–39.
 20. Gene Garthwaite makes this point as well, see “The Bakhtiyari Khans, the Government of Iran, and the British, 1846–1915,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 3, no. 1 (January 1972): 43.
 21. Rudi Matthee, “Between Sympathy and Enmity: Nineteenth-Century Iranian Views of the British and Russians,” in *Looking at the Coloniser: Cross-Cultural Perceptions in Central Asia and the Caucasus, Bengal, and Related Areas*, ed. Beate Eschment and Hans Harder (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004), 327–33.

22. For two detailed accounts of Shaykh Khaz'al's rule and relations with the British, see Mostafa Ansari, *A History of Khuzistan, 1878–1925: A Study in Provincial Autonomy and Change* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1974); and William T. Strunk, *The Reign of Shaykh Khaz'al ibn Jabir and the Suppression of the Principality of 'Arabistan: A Study in British Imperialism in Southwestern Iran, 1897–1925* (PhD diss., University of Indiana, 1977).
23. For the Khozaymeh family, see Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *Small Players of the Great Game: The settlement of Iran's eastern borderlands and the creation of Afghanistan* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 41–121.
24. Nikki R. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution: an Interpretive History of Modern Iran* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 67.
25. McDouall to Wilson, November 14, 1895, enclosed in Wilson to Durand, November 23, 1895, FO 248/610.
26. Wilson to Durand, January 10, 1897, FO 248/650; Butcher to Wilson, January 29, 1897, enclosed in Wilson to Hardinge, February 20, 1897, FO 248/650.
27. Dobbs, "Note on the Anti-British Agitation in Seistan [*sic*]," enclosed in Dobbs to Dane, July 7, 1903, FO 60/727. Sir Henry McMahon would later become famous for his correspondence with Sharif Husayn of Mecca during the First World War.
28. Medical statistics can be found in the "Annual Administration Report[s] of the Persian Gulf Residency," in *The Persian Gulf Administration Reports 1873–1947*, 10 vols. (Gerrards Cross: Archive Editions, 1986), vol. 4, 1890–1899 through vol. 8, 1921–1930; see also Wright, *The English among the Persians*, 126.
29. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution*, 63.
30. "Bond executed by the Persian Merchants" (trans.) c. April 22, 1905 (16 Safar 1323), and "Memorandum of meetings of European firms held at the office of Messrs. Gray Paul and Company on the 14th and 18th May, 1905 to discuss the 'Reglement Douanier,'" both enclosed in Cox to Hardinge, June 4, 1905, FO 248/842; "Residency Diary," for week ending April 23, 1905, FO 248/842; "Residency Diary," for week ending April 30, 1905, FO 248/842; "Residency Diary," for week ending May 7, 1905, FO 248/842; "Residency Diary," for week ending May 14, 1905, FO 248/842; "Residency Diary," for week ending May 28, 1905, FO 248/843; "Residency Diary," for week ending June 18, 1905, FO 248/843.
31. "Residency Diary," for week ending June 24, 1906, FO 248/875; "Administrative Report on the Persian Gulf Residency for 1906–1907," in *The Persian Gulf Administration Reports*, vol. 6.
32. "Residency Diary," for week ending July 22, 1906, FO 248/875.
33. Rogers Platt Churchill, *The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907* (Cedar Rapids, IA: The Torch Press, 1939), 337.
34. O'Connor (private) to Du Boulay, April 26, 1912, Hardinge Mss., 53/63, Cambridge University Library.
35. Cox to Butler, June 6, 1908, enclosed in Cox to Marling, June 6, 1908, FO 248/934.
36. Cox to Butler, March 22, 1908, enclosed in Cox to Marling, March 22, 1908, FO 248/933.
37. For texts of these assurances see Ansari, *A History of Khuzistan*, 386–97.
38. Chick, "Memorandum on the Customs Revenue for Southern Persia, 1909–1910," enclosed in Trevor to Barclay, January 26, 1910, FO 248/990.
39. Garthwaite, "The Bakhtiari Khans, the Government of Iran, and the British, 1846–1915," 38; "Agreement Given to Sardar-e Jang" (trans.) 24 Rajab 1330 (July 9, 1912) in Townley to Vice-Consul Grey, July 13, 1912, FO 248/1047; Shaykh Khaz'al, Sardar Jang, and Mortaza Qoli Khan telegram to Samsam al-Saltaneh, Sardar As'ad, and Sardar Mohtasham (trans.) 30 Rabi' II 1331 (April 8, 1913), enclosed in Grey to Cox, April 9, 1913 (enclosed in Cox to Townley, April 19, 1913), FO 248/1067.

40. Geoffrey Jones, *The State and the Emergence of the British Oil Industry* (London: Macmillan, 1981), 155–56.
41. The title, Qavam al-Molk, was held by three men during this period. Muhammad Reza Khan Qavam al-Molk was assassinated in 1908, and his title passed to his son Habib Allah Khan. He died after falling from his horse in a hunting accident in 1916, and his son, Haji Ebrahim Khan, then assumed the title. See Mehdi Bamdad, *Sharh-e Hal-e Rejal-e Iran dar Qarn-e Davazdahom, Sizdahom, Chahardahom Hejri*, 6 vols. (Tehran: Zavvar, 1347/1968), 1:310–11 and 3:401–3; Karim Solaymani, *Alqab-e Rejal-e Dowreh-ye Qajariyeh* (Tehran: Nashr-i Nay, 1379/2000), 126–27.
42. Beck, *The Qashqa'i of Iran*, 124–28.
43. Ibid.; Chick, “Memorandum respecting the Disorders on the Trade Routes of Southern Persia,” enclosed in Cox to Grey, July 18, 1909, FO 248/962; Muleteers of Bushehr to the Merchants of Bushehr (trans.) 3 Rabi' II 1329 (April 3, 1911), enclosed in Cox to Barclay, July 23, 1911, FO 248/1024; Chick, “Memorandum on the Bushire [sic]-Shiraz Road from August to October, 1912,” enclosed in Cox to Townley, December 22, 1912, FO 248/1048.
44. Barclay telegram to Grey, December 29, 1910, enclosed in Foreign Office to India Office, December 29/30, 1910, IOR: L/P&S/10/163.
45. For these operations, see the “Annual Administration Report[s] of the Persian Gulf Residency,” for the years 1910–1913 in *The Persian Gulf Administration Reports*, vols. VI and VII; also R. M. Burrell, “Arms and Afghans in Makran: An Episode in Anglo-Persian Relations, 1905–1912,” in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 49, no. 1 (In Honour of Ann K. S. Lambton) (1986), 8–24.
46. “Residency Diary,” for the month of January 1913, in *Political Diaries of the Persian Gulf Residency*, vol. 5 (Farnham Common: Archive Editions, 1990).
47. Smart to Townley, May 23, 1912, enclosed in Townley to Grey, June 23, 1912 (enclosed in Foreign Office to India Office, July 18, 1912), IOR: L/P&S/10/197.
48. These figures are largely drawn from British correspondence, but a useful synopsis of the Anglo-Indian advances and Iran's debts can be found in *The Times*, September 23, 1913, p. 5, col. D, and September 24, 1913, p. 5, col. E. (*The Times*, Digital Archive, 1785–1985).
49. Townley telegram to Grey, August 30, 1912, enclosed in Foreign Office to India Office, September 3, 1912, IOR: L/P&S/10/197; Smart telegram to Townley, October 28, 1912, enclosed in Cox to McMahon, November 3, 1912, IOR: L/P&S/10/197.
50. W. F. T. O'Connor, *On the Frontier and Beyond: A Record of Thirty Years' Service* (London: John Murray, 1931), 197.
51. Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, 502.
52. For a recent discussion of Pahlavi tribal policies see Stephanie Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State, 1921–1941* (New York: Routledge, 2007).
53. Cox telegram to Barclay, November 24, 1911, FO 248/1025; Barclay telegram to Cox, November 28, 1911, FO 248/1027; Bill telegram to Barclay, February 9, 1912, FO 248/1045.
54. Barclay, “Persia, Annual Report, 1911,” in *Iran: Political Diaries, 1881–1865*, ed. R. M. Burrell and R. L. Jarman (Farnham Common, UK: Archive Editions, 1997), 5:383–84.
55. Peter Hopkirk, *On Secret Service East of Constantinople: The Plot to Bring Down the British Empire* (London: John Murray, 1994), 105–20; Christopher Sykes, *Wassmuss, “The German Lawrence”* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1936).
56. Parviz Afsar, *Tarikh-e Zhandarmeri-ye Iran* (Qum: Chapkhanah-i Qum, 1333/1954), 96–8; Stephanie Cronin, “The Government Gendarmerie and the Great War in Iran,” in *La Perse et la Grande Guerre*, ed. Oliver Bast (Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 2002), 196–205; Ahmad Akhgar, *Zendegi-ye Man Dar Haftad Sal-e Tarikh-e Mo'aser-e Iran* (Tehran: Author, 1366/1987), chap. 16; Hajj Mehdi Qoli Khan Hedayat

- Mokhber al-Saltaneh, *Khaterat va Khatarat: Tusheh-i az Tarikh-e Shesh Padeshah va Gushe-i az Dowreh-ye Zendegi-ye Man* (Tehran: Zavvar, 1375/1996), 271. Mokhber al-Saltaneh also keenly resented European interference in his administration. O'Connor and Cox accused him of assisting Wassmuss and encouraging the anti-British agitation, and they eventually secured his recall in September 1915.
57. Extract from *Jam-e Jam* (trans., n.d.), enclosed in Trevor to Marling, October 10, 1915, FO 248/1104.
 58. Shaykh Muhammad Husayn Borazjani to Cox, 4 Jomadi I 1333 (March 20, 1915), as quoted in Hajj Mehdi Qoli Khan Hedayat, *Khaterat va Khatarat*, 273–74.
 59. Hamid Algar, “Religious Forces in Twentieth-Century Iran,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, vol. 7, *From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, ed. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly, and Charles Melville (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991; reprinted 2007), 737.
 60. Its members communicated their ultimatum to O'Connor in French, styling themselves “Le Comité National Pour La Protection de l'Indépendance Persane.” A copy of this declaration, dated November 10, 1915, is enclosed in Trevor to Marling, November 21, 1915, FO 248/1104.
 61. O'Connor, *On the Frontier and Beyond*, 235.
 62. Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I*, 153–213.
 63. Chelmsford telegram to India Office, June 6, 1918, IOR: L/P&S/10/727.
 64. Gough to Grant, July 22, 1918, IOR: L/P&S/10/613, in *British Intelligence and Policy on Persia (Iran) 1900–1949* [hereafter *BIPP*], ed. A. J. Farrington (Leiden: IDC publishers, 2004), fiche 121, part 21, no. 143.
 65. Ayaz Kikha Khan to the *zabet* of Liravi, 8 Rabi' II 1336 (January 21, 1918), enclosed in Gough to Grant, July 22, 1918, IOR: L/P&S/10/613, in *BIPP*, fiche 121, part 21, no. 143.
 66. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983, 1991), 5–7.
 67. Gough, “Report on the recent trouble with Soulat-ed-Douleh [*sic*] and the Kashqais [*sic*],” enclosed in Gough to Grant, July 22, 1918, IOR: L/P&S/10/613, in *BIPP*, fiche 121, part 21, no. 143.
 68. The same may be said of the Bakhtiari Khans during this period. See Arash Khazeni, “The Bakhtiari Tribes in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 25, no. 2 (2005): 377–98.
 69. Beck, *Qashqa'i of Iran*, 102–3.
 70. Gough telegram to Marling, June 9, 1918, IOR: L/P&S/10/613, in *BIPP*, fiche 119, part 20, no. 82.
 71. Gough, “Report on the recent trouble with Soulat-ed-Douleh [*sic*] and the Kashqais [*sic*],” enclosed in Gough to Grant, July 22, 1918, IOR: L/P&S/10/613, in *BIPP*, fiche 121, part 21, no. 143.
 72. Cox telegram to Curzon, January 19, 1919, IOR: L/P&S/10/614, in *BIPP*, fiche 124, part 24, no. 35.
 73. Abrahamian, “Oriental Despotism: The Case of Qajar Iran,” 9–31.
 74. Ashraf, “Conspiracy Theories,” 137–48.
 75. Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran*, 16–39.

PART III

**NATIONALISM AND THE
APPROPRIATION OF THE PAST**

CHAPTER 8

THE ACADEMIC DEBATE ON IRANIAN IDENTITY

NATION AND EMPIRE ENTANGLED

AFSHIN MATIN-ASGARI

THIS CHAPTER BRIEFLY COVERS AND COMMENTS ON an ongoing scholarly debate on Iranian identity. Bypassing most of this debate's long history and complex politics, it will focus on its latest phase, from the early 1990s to the present, and only within the academic discipline of Iranian studies. The works examined here, whether in Persian or English, are mainly those published outside of Iran. To make this preliminary study manageable, it is assumed that the relevant scholarly production in Iran largely overlaps with its counterpart outside the country.¹

The chapter begins by defining the modernist, or “Persian-National,” paradigm of Iranian identity. By the early 1990s, this conceptual paradigm already was seen to be in crisis, facing increasing intellectual and political challenges. Some of these main challenges, posed by new and revisionist scholarship, will then be delineated. The chapter concludes that while the Persian-National paradigm has lost its sway, no coherent alternative conception has yet emerged to replace it. This “paradigm crisis,” however, is also an opportunity, encouraging greater intellectual flexibility and creativity. Finally, as a point of departure for further debate, it is suggested that the Persian-National paradigm and its critics actually converge on notions of premodern Iran as an empire, and not a nation, with historical high culture continuity sustained via the hegemony of the Persian language.

THE PERSIAN-NATIONAL PARADIGM OF IRANIAN IDENTITY

The idea of Iran as a national entity—that is, a country with linguistic, political and ethnic identity—had originated in the Avestan period . . . This was the traditional view until vigorously challenged.²

—A. Shapur Shahbazi, “The History of the Idea of Iran”

Our survey of the debate on Iranian identity will focus on the academic field of Iranian studies. The most influential institutionalized presence in this field is the U.S.-based International Society for Iranian Studies (ISIS), publishing the field's leading periodical *Iranian Studies*. Secondly, and also U.S.-based, there are donor institutions, such as the Foundation for Iranian Studies and Kian Foundation, publishing the Persian quarterlies *Iran Nameh* and *Iranshenasi*, respectively. Many articles in these Persian periodicals are by scholars who also publish in *Iranian Studies* and *Encyclopaedia Iranica*. During the last two or three decades, scholars contributing to these publications, especially those on their respective editorial boards, have shaped standards in the discipline of Iranian studies. They regularly organize scholarly conferences and events, raise funds, dispense rank, recognition and awards, and generally play a decisive role in Iran-related academic hiring and publication.³

A major academic discussion/debate on Iranian identity began during the early 1990s in the pages of *Iranshenasi*, *Iranian Studies*, and *Iran Nameh*. In the summer of 1992, the Persian quarterly *Iranshenasi* launched a series of articles in response to what the journal's editor, Jalal Matini, described as recent attempts, by unidentified individuals outside Iran, "at negating Iranian identity and the existence of an Iranian nation in previous centuries, and at claiming that Iranian identity was conceived in Europe rather than in Iran."⁴ Matini, and his chief collaborator, Jalal Khaleqi-Motlaq, then published a few lead articles in *Iranshenasi* in 1992 and 1993, defending the continuity of Iranian identity, as nationhood, throughout history.⁵

Iranshenasi was the proper venue for such an effort since it was officially "dedicated to the promotion of Persian culture and the maintenance of its traditional values."⁶ Given this stance, Matini and Khaleqi-Motlaq ascribed political motives to their unidentified adversaries, while presenting their own views as academic. Notwithstanding their obvious partisanship, the scholarly format of these contributions makes them a useful starting point for tracing the ensuing academic debate. Khaleqi-Motlaq's first article began with a philological thesis that remained central to his subsequent arguments. Basically, he claimed that although coming from vastly different time periods and linguistic contexts, the root terms *Ariya* and *Iran* should always be synonymous in meaning:

The Avestan and Old Persian word, "Ariyayi" should be translated not as "Aryan" but "Iranian," which is merely its newer form. This is because toady "Aryan" encompasses all Indo-European ethnicities (who are related to each other through language), whereas in Avestan and Old Persian, "Ariyayi" meant only Iranian. At any rate, Avestan texts and Achaemenid inscriptions indicate the presence of a strong sense of "Iranian-ness" (*ehsas-e Iran-gara'i*), ever since the remotest days of Iranian history.⁷

This strategic decision then enabled Khaleqi-Motlaq to find a homogenized sense of Iran and Iranian-ness across the expanse of recorded history. His method of translation, for example, could turn King Darius' famous Persepolis inscription into a declaration of "Iranian-ness," even though the actual term used there had been *Ariyayi*.⁸ As a recent study shows, this conflation of the terms *Ariya*, *Aryan*, and *Iran*, which in fact came from divergent ancient, medieval, and modern languages and historical contexts, originated in nineteenth-century Orientalist scholarship and was adopted by modern Iranian nationalist discourse.⁹

Khaleqi-Motlaq's second major assumption was to equate this sense of "Iranian-ness" with national identity. Disregarding the great scholarly controversy raging on the historicity of modern nations, his philological twist established the case for "Iran" conveying a fixed sense of national identity throughout history. For example, he cited Herodotus' claim that ancient Persians and Medes were Aryan. From this, he deduced that "probably all Iranian ethnic groups saw themselves sharing this common name, which shows full cognizance of national solidarity."¹⁰

Interestingly, Khaleqi-Motlaq also acknowledged a significant strain of "excessive nationalism" in ancient Iran. He cited several textual examples of extreme prejudice in favor of Iranians, as opposed to all non-Iranians, explaining such views in terms of a basic "Iranian claim to world leadership."¹¹ This Iranian posture of world leadership then became the focus of a follow-up article, where Khaleqi-Motlaq analyzed texts like Cyrus' famous proclamation of world emperors. The glaring lack of reference to Iran by Achaemenid rulers, such as Cyrus, then could be explained in terms of their larger claims to being world emperors. In other words, "Cyrus . . . calls himself king of the world's four quarters, and not (merely) of Iranian lands. This is because Cyrus claims dominion over the entire world, and not just Iran."¹²

In the end, Khaleqi-Motlaq stresses the rhetoric of world empire to prove the existence of an Iranian identity and nationhood in antiquity. He is convincing about the Achaemenid roots of the world empire notion and in noting that textual evidence tying this notion directly to the idea of "Iran" does not appear until the Sasanian era. The argument, however, weakens when he projects Sasanian imperial notions of "Iran" backward to antiquity as well as forward all the way to the present. Khaleqi-Motlaq thus creates a homogenized sense of Iranian identity that is simultaneously imperial and national across the millennia. This basic proposition is at the core of the "Persian-National" paradigm of Iranian identity, elaborated further by Matini, who, as we shall see, shares it with several scholarly generations, both Iranian and non-Iranian.

Complementing Khaleqi-Motlaq's focus on the ancient period, Matini's 1992 *Iranshenasi* article covers "Iran in the Islamic Era."¹³ Matini too makes it clear that he defends the historicity of the idea of Iran and of the persistence of Iranian identity throughout history. He begins by bringing two main charges against his adversaries. First, they "oppose the existence of a country called Iran and of Iranian identity." Second, they rely mostly on sources in languages other than Persian.¹⁴ Matini then deploys his own impressive knowledge of medieval Persian texts to demonstrate abundant references to "Iran." Here, he is quite successful at showing the recurrence in post-Islamic history of terms like *Iran* and *Iranian* as significant territorial and political designations.¹⁵ This important observation, however, is used to support the following generalization: "The usage of the terms 'Iranian' and 'Iranians' in the Persian texts of the Islamic era leads to the conclusion that all the inhabitants of this land, despite their differences in language, dialect, religion, culture, and tradition, were called 'Iranian.'"¹⁶ Even if true, this sweeping generalization does not make it clear exactly what such notions of "Iran" and "Iranian" meant in medieval texts, who used them, outside these textual references, and for what purposes. Matini wants to equate such medieval usage with a fixed historical notion of Iranian identity coterminous with nationhood. According to him, the argument about nations and nationhood being modern phenomena may be "partially true," but applies to European history, and not to Iran. He acknowledges too

that the original meaning of the term *mellat*, used for “nation” in modern Persian, was a religious community.¹⁷ Moreover, he cites the *Shahnameh* tradition of using “Iran” for a sprawling region, stretching from the Oxus River in Central Asia to the Nile in Africa. In other words, the *Iran Shahr* or *Iran Zamin* of pre-Islamic times, as well as terms like *Mamalek-e Iran*, or its similar variations in Islamic texts, signified a vast and shifting imperial domain between those of Rome and China. Noting all of the above, Matini rejects the conclusion that modern Iranian nationhood and national identity emerged when the remnants of an imperial Iran were reconfigured into a modern nation-state. Instead, he insists on the sameness of national and imperial conceptions of Iran and Iranian identity: “All of Iran’s inhabitants, at all times and without exception, were called ‘Iranian.’”¹⁸

This position, carved by Matini and Khaleqi-Motlaq in *Iranshenasi*, defines the paradigm of Iranian identity adhered to by many scholars in the academic field of Iranian studies down to the present. We find a succinct articulation of this paradigm in a 1993 symposium on “Iranian Cultural Identity,” whose proceedings were then published in *Iranian Studies*.¹⁹ The opening statement of this symposium was by Ehsan Yarshater, chief editor of *Encyclopaedia Iranica* and one of the most influential scholars in Iranian studies during the second half of the twentieth century.²⁰ Yarshater’s commanding status was clear in that his definition went unchallenged by other participants, who were also leading Iranian studies scholars. Only Ahmad Ashraf, Yarshater’s closest collaborator in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, mentioned other conceptions of Iranian identity.²¹ And as we shall see, it was Ashraf who would later try to reconcile Yarshater’s conception to revisionist scholarship.

In Yarshater’s 1993 definition, we find the most clear and concise formulation of the Persian-National paradigm of Iranian identity: “Iranian identity is clearly asserted in the inscriptions of Darius the Great (522–486 BCE), who as an Aryan and a Persian was fully conscious of his racial affiliation and proud of his national identity.”²² Yarshater’s two-page declaration captures all key features of this identity paradigm. He mentions a mystical-spiritual dimension, something anchored in the depth of the “Persian psyche.” With the coming of Islam, the Persian psyche became “confused and bedeviled” as Iran was forced to give up its (Zoroastrian) “national religion.”²³ The “greatest of all challenges” to Persian identity, however, comes from its recent confrontation with “the West.” But according to Yarshater, the 1978–79 Revolution’s “Neither Eastern, Nor Western” identity construction was a wrongheaded response to this challenge. The revolution was only a “retrogression,” causing Iranians to suffer from a sense of “anonymity” and “submerged identity.” The true remedy, he believes, is a restoration of the familiar Persian identity conception. Authentic Iranian/Persian identity could be found in “a shared and rewarding past,” kept alive through the medium of the Persian language as “the chief carrier of the Persian worldview and Persian culture.”²⁴

The Persian language (not *Farsi*, please) is a reservoir of Iranian thought, sentiment, and values, and a repository of its literary arts. It is only by loving, learning, teaching, and above all enriching this language that the Persian identity may continue to survive.²⁵

What Yarshater succinctly articulates here can be found in more elaborate formulations throughout his vast and erudite body of work,²⁶ as well as in the output

of at least three generations of both Iranian and non-Iranian academics. The peculiar ideological features of this conception of Iranian identity and history were recognized in contemporary scholarship, for example by the Italian scholar Alessandro Bausani who dubbed it “Aryan Neo-Achaemenid nationalism.”²⁷ Briefly, these features include the following:

1. Iranian identity is an ancient phenomenon with an archaic core going back several millennia.
2. For about 2,500 years, Iranian identity has been a form of “national” identity.
3. From its archaic inception, Iranian identity has been linked to kingship over Iranian lands. Conversely, land or territory becomes Iranian (*Iran-shahr* or *Iran-zamin*) when placed under Iranian kingship.
4. Persian ethnicity is at the core of Iranian identity. The predominance of the Persian language over the inhabitants of Iranian lands, including non-Persian speakers, turns them into Iranians. Thus Iranian and Persian identities are synonymous, just as Iran and Persia have been the same land/country/nation since Achaemenid times. (Up to very recently, Yarshater’s editorial policy in *Iranica* required substituting “Persia” and “Persian” for “Iran” and “Iranian,” just as the title of his 1993 presentation was “Persian Identity in Historical Perspective.”)²⁸
5. Iranian/Persian identity has a racial component. Like Darius, Persians must be proud of their (Aryan) racial affiliation.
6. The original “national religion” of Iran/Persia was Zoroastrian. Islam has been a foreign imposition. However, Persians modified Islam to make it fit the “Persian psyche.”²⁹

The focus on Yarshater’s definition of Iranian identity is meant to emphasize its paradigmatic significance in modern Iranian as well as European scholarship. Numerous examples may be cited, but only a few can be given here. In the immediate aftermath of the revolution, for instance, some émigré intellectuals feared the loss of Iranian identity, and even the Persian language, in a “second Arab invasion.” Independent scholar Shahrokh Meskoob was among those who, like Yarshater, sought political and cultural salvation in the restoration of the Persian identity paradigm. Meskoob’s 1982 *Iranian Identity and the Persian Language* retold the familiar story of the fall of pre-Islamic Iran and its *national* revival through the medium of Persian language:

After suffering defeat at the hands of the Arabs, and after converting to Islam, the Iranian people also returned to the past . . . In the tenth century, when they organized their own first regional governments and concomitantly wrote and composed poetry in their own language, they assumed the character of a discrete and independent people or nation.³⁰

Meskoob, who came from a communist background, and would go on to write quite sophisticated accounts of Iranian modernity,³¹ merely echoed the orthodoxy of his intellectual generation. The belief that Persian language has preserved Iran’s nationhood or “the spiritual unity of Iranian history,” is found, for example, in the writings of ‘Abd al-Hosayn Zarrinkub, one of Iran’s most influential academic

historians from the 1960s to the 1990s: "Even the deadly blows of Mongols and Tartars could not impair this spiritual unity . . . Thus, neither the Arab conquest nor its subsequent decline and fragmentation impinged upon the unity of Iranian history."³² According to Zarrinkub, race and language were key elements in the forging of an "Iranian spirit" across history: "The Iranian Spirit did not suffer much under Islamic conquests; on the contrary, it made Islam an instrument for expressing its own capabilities. Of course, as far as the Islamic culture is concerned, the Iranian language, being an Aryan language, undoubtedly played the same role in the dissemination of a Semitic religion as the Aryan Latin language had in the spread and cultivation of Semitic Christianity."³³ A generation before Zarrinkub's, we find the same basic emplotment, with a stronger emphasis on race, predominant in Iranian historiography. The prominent mid-twentieth-century historian Abbas Eqbal Ashtiyani, for instance, had written:

The Iranian spent a hundred years of severe humiliation under the yoke of Arab domination . . . Yet he did not give up on acquiring knowledge, something that the Arabs then lacked . . . The efforts of patriotic Iranians and their mixing with the Arab race caused the latter to pay attention to science and *belle lettres* too and to join Iranians and other old nations in spreading ancient knowledge and traditions.³⁴

During the 1940s, Eqbal Ashtiyani edited *Yadegar*, Iran's leading "literary, scientific, and historical monthly magazine." *Yadegar's* main objective was to educate its readers about their Iranian homeland, its past and present, and "what made Iran [and Iranians] distinguished from and superior to other countries and ethnic groups." It also strove to "preserve the heritage of Iran's glorious past," especially the Persian language.³⁵

Back in the 1920s, Eqbal Ashtiyani and a few other scholars were commissioned by the government to write history textbooks for Iran's new primary and secondary public schools. These scholars set themselves the task of creating a European-style master narrative of national history, divided into ancient, medieval, and modern periods. Their goal, according to Eqbal Ashtiyani, was to "present a public history of Iran in the style of the collaborative histories produced by scholars in Europe."³⁶ By the 1930s, Eqbal Ashtiyani himself had produced more than twenty such volumes imbued with strong nationalist overtones.³⁷

Eqbal Ashtiyani's main collaborator in the project of crafting Iran's master narrative of national history was Hasan Pirniya.³⁸ Covering ancient history, Pirniya's three-volume *Iran-e Bastan* (Ancient Iran), published from 1931 to 1933, blended the best and worst of Orientalist scholarship with traditional Persian and Arabic historical sources. On the positive side, Pirniya included the multiplicity of European scholarly views, thus admitting, for example, the difficulty of ascribing territorial, political, or ethnic meanings to the term *Iran* prior to the Sasanian era. Furthermore, he cited medieval sources, such as Mas'udi's *Moruj al-zahab*, to note that the Sasanian capital of Ctesiphon, or "the heart of *Iran-shahr*," lay in Iraq. Thus he "warned" emphatically, "From the viewpoint of Iranian history, the Iranian plateau is no more than a geographic term; this is because the boundaries of this plateau correspond neither to the ethnic conception of Aryan Iranians, nor to the zone of Iranian languages."³⁹ Immediately following these lines, however, Pirniya's narrative suddenly takes a racially supremacist turn, rationalizing the forcible acquisition of

non-Aryan lands and the killing, enslavement and “ethnic cleansing” of their native population:

At any rate, coming to the Iranian Plateau, the Aryans found there people who were ugly and inferior in race, habits, morals and religion . . . The Aryans called these native people *tur* or *div* [demon] . . . Considering them inferior, the Aryans treated these people as victors treat the vanquished. Therefore, at first [the Aryans] accorded them no rights whatsoever, fighting and killing them wherever they were found. But later, when natives no longer posed any threat, the Aryans assigned to them difficult tasks, such as farming, animal husbandry, and domestic services; Thus, being needed, the natives received certain rights, such as those accorded slaves and concubines living under their masters’ protection . . . The Aryans came to Iran not to conquer and plunder, but to settle in this country; therefore, they had to take the natives’ lands.⁴⁰

The preceding passage is symptomatic of the confusions that Orientalist racial thinking had interjected into Iran’s nationalist historiography. Here, Pirniya overlooks not only his own learned discussions but the obvious fact that a region cannot be called “Iran,” or “Iranian plateau,” before the Aryans, who would give it their name, had arrived there.⁴¹

It would be hard to overstate the extent to which the intellectual generation of Pirniya and Eqbal Ashtiyani shared their notions of Iranian identity and history, including racial obsessions, with mainstream European scholarship.⁴² To cite a typical example, we find the 1953 *The Legacy of Persia*, a survey of Iranian history by leading European scholars, opening with the following statement: “Considering the tremendous role which Aryan man has played in world history, how unfamiliar to us (his descendants) are his origins and the lands that were the cradle of our race.”⁴³ Earlier in the twentieth century, the identification of “Iran” with an Aryan “nation,” as well as with “the empire of the Aryans,” had received authoritative sanction by German Orientalist Ernst Herzfeld, whose archaeological work provided an important cornerstone to the construction of the Pahlavi regime’s “Aryan and Neo-Achaemenid” brand of nationalism.⁴⁴ Even more significant was the 1930s scholarship of Arthur Christensen whose master narrative still dominates the historiography of pre-Islamic Iran. Christensen projected the image of a highly centralized empire whose normative state was the rule of absolute monarchs over enormously large and often expanding domains. His Sasanian polity was indeed a “world empire” with a coherent Iranian identity. Yet his emphasis on imperial centralization and cohesion obscured the internal contradictions, both political and religious, that recurrently plunged Sasanian rule into upheavals and eventually led to its downfall.⁴⁵

Nor can we ignore the contributions of European scholars admired as champions of Iran’s national independence and liberal tradition. Here, the most widely recognized figure is Edward Granville Browne, the British Orientalist who composed the first narrative on Iran’s rebirth as a modern nation. As far back as 1910, Browne wrote, “Of all the ancient nations whose names are familiar to us Persia is almost the only one which still exists as an independent political unit within her old frontiers . . . inhabited by a people still wonderfully homogeneous . . . Again and again Persia has been apparently submerged by Greeks, Arabs, Mongols, Tartars, Turks, and Afghans . . . and yet she has hitherto always reemerged as a distinct nation.”⁴⁶ In many ways, therefore, the Persian-National conception of Iranian

identity was indebted to Orientalist scholarship. However, its final articulation, and institutionalization as national ideology, was a task accomplished by early twentieth century Iran's intellectual elite.

ACADEMIC CHALLENGES TO THE PERSIAN- NATIONAL IDENTITY PARADIGM

In actual fact the idea of Iran, which had come into being as a political and religious idea in the 3rd century, developed under the Sasanians and outlived their empire to become the main component of a traditional heritage that continued for centuries to appeal to the minds of scholars and poets.

—Gherardo Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran*, 1989⁴⁷

The Qajar empire in the second half of the nineteenth century simply was not a nation-state . . . Iranian national identity was not an existent that needed to be symbolized, but an idea yet to be realized.

—Juan R. Cole, "Marking Boundaries," 1996⁴⁸

The 1993 discussion/definition of Iranian identity within the field of Iranian studies coincided with the publication in the same year of *Iran as Imagined Nation*. Inspired by Benedict Anderson's influential 1990 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, this book's author, Mostafa Vaziri, radically challenged prevailing academic notions of Iran and Iranian identity.⁴⁹ According to Vaziri, in premodern usage, "Iran" referred to a geographic entity only. Moreover, claimed Vaziri, notions of Iranian national or political identity rooted in medieval or ancient history were the "fabrication" of Orientalist scholarship. Iran's nationalist historians had borrowed this "fabrication," turning it into the foundation of modern Iranian identity.⁵⁰

The field of Iranian studies basically ignored *Iran as Imagined Nation*, dismissing it in a few short and negative reviews. Vaziri had flatly rejected the field's orthodoxy and was predictably accused of denying Iranians agency in creating their identity, historical consciousness, and nationhood. In retrospect, *Iran as Imagined Nation* was a noteworthy if partially flawed challenge. Vaziri's basic critique of nationalist biases in mainstream Iranian historiography was valid; but he had overlooked some crucial textual evidence, and his rhetoric of identity "fabrication" was overblown.⁵¹

The major weakness of *Iran as Imagined Nation* was its claim that the concept "Iran" had no significant political meaning until the modern era. On the other hand, Vaziri's "provocative" contention concerning crucial Orientalist contributions to the formation of modern Iranian historical consciousness had been acknowledged by generations of Iranian scholars. In 1994, for example, Yarshater himself had noted, "In our time, the history of ancient Iran has emerged from its former obscurity due to the efforts of Western scholars, providing educated Iranians with all the more reason to appreciate the notion of ancient Iran."⁵² The intellectual generations preceding Yarshater's admitted indebtedness to European academics even more readily, often going as far as crediting Orientalist scholars for the "revival" of Iran. It was indeed the ultranationalist Ebrahim Purdavud who in 1927 had declared, "The Iran of today is alive due to the efforts of European scholars."⁵³ One generation earlier, the very title of Mohammad-Hosayn Forugh'i's pioneering 1901 *The History of Iran*:

From the Beginning to the Present: In Contemporary Style boasted of introducing a new historiography, in line with contemporary European scholarship.⁵⁴

A recent study of the famous twentieth-century politician-historian Hasan Taqizadeh's early career notes his acknowledgment of crucial Orientalist contributions to national identity formation in Iran. Writing in the Berlin-published *Kaveh* at the height of World War in 1918, Taqizadeh affirms this point in a striking passage that also anticipates, and responds to, Saidian-style critiques of Orientalism:

Some have argued that those who study the nations of Asia and Africa do so with the political motives of the European powers . . . [But] Some of them [i.e., Orientalists] have been heroes of the weak nations and done great service to them against the interests of their own nations. They have rescued objects by archeology . . . manuscripts have been edited and published . . . all of this has helped the nations of the East to *regain their identity* . . . *they know more about our history and culture than we do* . . . [N]ot one Iranian knows Pahlavi . . . it is only because of Europeans who deciphered the old scripts of Avestan, Sanskrit, and Pahlavi that today we know about our kings and ancestors . . . Iranians must become aware of their ancient culture and their thinkers, artists, and kings *so that they will be aware of their great nation in the past before Islam and of what race they derived from*, how they have reached their current condition, and how *to regain their original greatness as a nation*.⁵⁵

Taqizadeh's most likely example of Orientalist dedication to Iran must have been his own intellectual and political mentor Edward G. Browne. Scholars like Abbas Amanat and Mansour Bonakdarian have noted the contribution of Browne to Iranian historiography, as well as his support for Iran's independent nationhood.⁵⁶ However, it may be argued further that Browne provided the historiography of modern Iran with a master narrative that holds sway to the present. Browne's 1910 *The Persian Revolution* had of course borrowed "raw material" from Iranian primary sources like Nazem al-Eslam Kermani and Taqizadeh.⁵⁷ But *The Persian Revolution* introduced what these sources lacked, namely, a fully realized narration of the Constitutional Revolution as the birth event of Iran's modern nationhood.

The Persian Revolution also insisted that the upheaval from 1906 to 1910 revived "Persia" as a great "nation" that had existed since antiquity. Moreover, it made axiomatic the usage of *mellat* for "the People" or "the Nation," opposing it to *dowlat*, standing for "the State," understood in a modern sense.⁵⁸ Late Qajar era Iranian reformists had begun to impart such modern meanings to these terms, but it was Browne who first embedded this crucial new lexicon into a narrative of Iran's national history.

As Amanat has noted, seeking the sympathy of his book's British audience, Browne portrayed the Constitutional Revolution as "authentically Iranian," hence firmly rooted in the country's history and Shi'i Islamic culture. *The Persian Revolution* thus exaggerated the clergy's leadership role, while downplaying the key contribution of secular reformers and statesmen, Azali Babis and free thinkers, Armenians, Caucasians, and Iranian Social Democratic revolutionaries.⁵⁹ The "Browne Paradox," that is, the peculiarity of the clergy's leading role in a modern nationalist revolution, thus initiated a long-running controversy in modern Iranian historiography. Since the 1990s, however, new scholarship has emphasized the Constitutional Revolution's blend of secularism and religious heterodoxy.⁶⁰

The innovative historiography and new political nomenclature emerging around the time of the Constitutional Revolution was an important theme of the

Iranian identity debate from 1993 to 1994. For example, a 1994 article by historian Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi in *Iran Nameh* showed how late nineteenth-century Persian texts “rearticulated” terms like *mellat*, *keshvar*, *dowlat*, *enqelab*, *siyasat*, and *Iran* itself, to express new meanings in line with a rising modern Iranian historical consciousness. The new historical paradigm called for “the silent and forgotten pre-Islamic past to be imagined as a utopia.” And finally, “Iran” had to be reimagined as something new, a change implying “turning away from one identity to adopt a new one”.⁶¹ “The ‘*Iranzamin*’ of ancient texts is not a country with the same borders as today’s Iran. Modern Iran came to be when nation-states appeared in the wake of European supremacy and the collapse of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Gurkani-Indian empires.”⁶² Tavakoli-Targhi also drew attention to the contribution of Persian texts from Mughal India to the formation of modern Iranian identity and historiography.⁶³ This further challenged nationalist assumptions about the historical linkage of Persian language to its “natural” homeland in Iran.

To appreciate how historians like Tavakoli-Targhi had departed from the dominant paradigm of Iranian identity, we may consider a scholarly “exchange” in the same fall 1994 issue of *Iran Nameh*. Here Mohammad Ja’far Mahjub, an authority on classical Persian literature, launched a vehement attack on Ahmad Karimi-Hakak, a younger scholar who, like Tavakoli-Targhi, had drawn attention to significant Persian literary production in India. Karimi-Hakkak, however, had gone further to openly criticize the possessive claims of Iranian nationalism toward the Persian language. Mahjub’s angry retort accused Karimi-Hakkak of betraying his own Iranian heritage: “From about two to three thousand years ago, Iran has been invaded by savage people from the East and the West . . . If you know anything about the history of countries like India or China, you see none have had such a destiny . . . For three thousand years, the Iranian felt his existence subjected to the blows of the foreigner’s lash, sword, and arrows. And so he came to know the foreigner first. Life hence meant the anticipation of death. Thereafter, he learned the distinction between ‘the self’ and the foreigner, recognizing his own ethnic identity.”⁶⁴ Mahjub was defending the orthodox position on Iranian identity in almost Heideggerian existential terms, not affected the least, for example, by his own Marxist intellectual background.⁶⁵ During the decade of the 1990s, however, the sanctity of such entrenched intellectual positions was challenged by an accumulation of destabilizing scholarly criticism. A cogent critical voice, for instance, came from Austrian scholar Bert Fragner, who published in German and thus had an indirect and belated impact. According to Fragner, Iranian nationalists had deployed the historical hegemony of the Persian language high culture to construct a modern Iranian identity. Fragner thus reaffirmed the central significance of the Persian language to both modern and premodern Iranian identity constructions. But he saw Persian linguistic hegemony as crafted and sustained historically via dominant elite cultures, and not as a “national” heritage shared by a homogeneous Iranian people.⁶⁶

Fragner’s emphasis on the ideological construction of Iranian identity complemented another important breakthrough on the historicity of the Iran concept. First appearing in 1989, Italian scholar Gherardo Gnoli’s *The Idea of Iran* had argued that “Iran,” as a political and religious concept, was an invention of Sasanian imperial propaganda. Gnoli’s intervention was crucial in several ways. First, it upheld the historicity of “Iran” as a political concept, but cut about a millennium out of

its formerly presumed lifespan. Second, Gnoli came close to Fragner and Vaziri in viewing Iranian identity as “invented tradition,” that is, an ideological or “imagined” construction.⁶⁷ Third, Gnoli, like Fragner, had noted that, as in virtually every other case, the historical construction of Iranian identity was accomplished by (political and religious) elites serving an imperial project.⁶⁸

Still, Gnoli had anachronistically used terms like *nation* and *nationalism* for Iran in the Sasanian period. This part of his argument—the conflation of national and imperial notions of Iranian identity—therefore remained in accord with the Persian-National paradigm. Thus Gnoli’s contribution was acknowledged as far back as the 1993 Iranian Studies symposium, and his thesis was incorporated in the section he wrote for *Encyclopaedia Iranica*’s 2006 entry on “Iranian identity.”⁶⁹

THE 2005–6 *IRANICA* DEFINITION OF IRANIAN IDENTITY: SYNTHESIZING IRRECONCILABLE PERSPECTIVES

Iran entered the age of nation-building and nationalism of the nineteenth century with the legacy of long-standing historical awareness and cultural consciousness of its identity.

Ahmad Ashraf, *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2006⁷⁰

This chapter will conclude with a brief note on how revisionist scholarship has destabilized the Persian-National definition of Iranian identity, causing partial yet significant changes in its recent semiofficial articulation by leading Iranian studies scholars. These changes will be traced in articles written by chief editors Ehsan Yarshater and Ahmad Ashraf in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*’s 2005–6 entries on “Iran” and “Iranian Identity.”

Showing the impact of revisionist arguments, Yarshater’s 2005 entry on “Iran” still used concepts such as “Achaemenid nationalism” but sparingly and with more qualifications: “The Achaemenids were proud to call themselves Aryan and Persian but neither their personal religion nor their nationalism colored their imperial rule.”⁷¹ Moreover, Yarshater noted the Arsacids, or Parthians, whose five-century emporium was “the longest a dynasty has ruled Iran,” were originally Saka, and obviously not Persian. Yarshater’s own account therefore made it clear that the post-Achaemenid millennium of Greek and Parthian rule could not be assimilated into a seamless Persian tradition. Still, and despite acknowledging Gnoli’s thesis, Yarshater used the imperial appellation “Iran” for the pre-Sasanian era. Moreover, and similar to Gnoli, he referred to Sasanian rule as “nationalistic.”⁷²

Nevertheless, Yarshater now recognized serious problems with using the “Iran” concept across the board and with making it synonymous with “Persia,” at least for the pre-Islamic period. His position therefore differed from the diehard defenders of transhistorical Iranian nationhood and identity who totally rejected the revisionism of scholars like Gnoli and Fragner.⁷³ In the end, however, Yarshater was unwilling to let go of the old Persian identity paradigm: “An important fact about Persia in the Islamic period is that, in spite of over 200 years of Arab rule, the change of faith to Islam, and the cultivation of Arabic in all religious matters, Persia did not lose its language, and its separate identity. Nor did it lose it to Turkish invaders who ruled the country, with minor exceptions, for over 800 years from the 11th century to the early 20th century.”⁷⁴ This passage insists on the historical continuity

of "Persian identity" in the post-Islamic era, while noting that during most of this period "the county" called "Persia" was not ruled by Persians. Yarshater thus partially accepts revisionist scholarship without trying to reconcile their tensions with the older Persian-National paradigm. For a systematic attempt at synthesizing old and new scholarship we must look at Ahmad Ashraf's 2006 *Encyclopaedia Iranica* entry on "Iranian Identity."⁷⁵

Ashraf begins by noting how Iranian identity has become a topic of major academic controversy. He then locates this contestation within broader scholarly debates on the "origins of nations." Here, he charts three main views on the origins of nations and nationalism: First, a "romantic nationalist" perspective that assumes nations to be "natural" entities, existing ever since archaic origins. Second, argues Ashraf, "modernist and postmodernist" perspectives consider nations as politically invented "modern constructs." The third position is what Ashraf defines as a "historicizing perspective" and upholds throughout his essay.⁷⁶ According to him, this perspective "recognizes that 'civic nation' is the product of modernity and as such could not be applied retrospectively to premodern times, [but] *it strongly rejects the modernist and postmodernist conceptions of a radical discontinuity between a modern nation and its historical past.*"⁷⁷ This three-fold typology is rather uncommon within the vast and diverse literature on the origin of nations and nationalism.⁷⁸ Yet, it clearly fits in with Ashraf's rejection of "radical discontinuity" between Iran as "a modern nation" and "its historical past." The strongest support for such a position, however, could have come from scholars like Anthony D. Smith and John Armstrong who stress ethnicity as the cultural root of modern nations.⁷⁹ Obviously aware of the pitfalls in grafting Iranian identity onto Persian ethnicity, Ashraf does not follow this path directly.

Still, Ashraf's typological triad, as well as his own definition of Iranian identity, leaves us with a host of unresolved problems. He sketches the "romantic nationalist" perspective on national identity cogently, noting its links to Orientalist scholarship and strong impact on Iranian studies. But he does not admit to the predominance of this perspective in twentieth-century scholarship on Iran. More problematic is Ashraf's contention that modernist and postmodernist perspectives on Iranian identity are the same. As this chapter has tried to show, the modernist, or Persian-National, perspective on Iranian identity corresponds to what Ashraf calls "romantic nationalist," while the postmodern label might loosely fit this paradigm's recent academic critics, like Vaziri, Fragner, and Tavakoli-Targhi. These two positions are hardly compatible, as demonstrated ironically by Ashraf's own attempt at synthesizing them into a "historicizing perspective."

Ashraf's argument for a "historicizing perspective" on Iranian identity hinges on making Iran an exception to patterns widely recognized in recent historical studies. Like Matini, he insists that while nation-states in general are products of modernity, Iran is an exceptional case where a modern "civic nation" developed, without "radical discontinuity," out of "its historic past." According to Ashraf, "Iranian identity" is precisely what links modern Iran to its "historical past." He argues this position by maintaining that Iranian identity is historically variable and yet somehow constant. In other words, Iranian identity has undergone centuries of transformation, and even several "mutations," while retaining certain constant features.⁸⁰

Ashraf's overall approach then is to dissolve contradictions and assimilate divergent strands of the Iranian identity debate into a seamless "historicizing perspective."

Among the proponents of this perspective, he enlists Yarshater, Gnoli, Ann K. S. Lambton, Bausani, Meskoob, Fereydu Adamiyat, Roy Mottahedeh, and Tavakoli-Targhi.⁸¹ This is a curious blending of diverse and clashing scholarly viewpoints. Gnoli and Yarshater, for instance, are said to agree that “a type of premodern ethno-national identity was present in Iran long before the invention of modern versions of the concept in the 18th and 19th centuries.”⁸² Though technically correct, this formulation nevertheless obviates Gnoli’s key difference with Yarshater, precisely when it comes to “radical discontinuity” in the evolution of the “Iran” concept.

Ashraf is most persuasive in his meticulously researched discussion of the historicity of the idea of Iran. Covering more deeply the ground previously surveyed by Matini, he reaches the same conclusion—that is, contrary to claims such as Vaziri’s, the political designation “Iran” was used by several post-Islamic dynasties.⁸³ But as we saw in Matini’s case, this important finding does not establish that premodern political conceptions of Iran were tied to any particular ethnicity or nationality. Nor can we assume that pre and post-Islamic conceptions of Iran had a fixed territorial or geographic reference.⁸⁴

Ashraf’s discussion clearly suggests imperial rather than national conceptions of premodern Iran. He pays considerable attention to revisionist scholarship that helps clarify the common confusion of national and imperial paradigms. He partially accepts Fragner’s argument about “Persian hegemony” providing post-Islamic Iranian history with political continuity from above and via high culture. In fact, Ashraf himself stresses the pivotal role of “the Persian *litterati* or the ‘men of the pen,’” as well as the sultans and *amirs* they served, namely, the “men of the sword,” in the historical formation and continuity of Iranian identity.⁸⁵ Yet he departs from Fragner in trying to link this elitist tradition to popular culture. This becomes an arduous task, forcing a retreat into the Persian-National paradigm and its metaphysical notions, such as the “Persian Soul,” which supposedly connected Iranians across history, class, ethnicity, and religion.⁸⁶

In the end, Ashraf’s endeavor of forging all relevant scholarship into a seamless conception of Iranian identity leaves us with antinomies and tensions intact. Often, his formulations begin as departures from the Persian-National paradigm, yet end up affirming the orthodox definition of Iranian identity, sustained by an unbroken “continuum from primordial times to the end of the Qajar period.” Hence his concluding remarks:

Transcending local, regional as well as kinship and tribal horizons, a relatively coherent historical and cultural conception of Iranian identity was developed in the long premodern history of Iran. The identity of Iranians was largely drawn from their territorial ties . . . They assumed that their ties to the historical conception of the lands of Iran were also manifestations of their common imagined ancestry, deeply rooted in Persian mythologies and traditional history. Even the Persianized ruling Turkic and Mongol men of the sword presented themselves as the heirs of Persian kings and *amirs* in a continuum from primordial times to the end of the Qajar period, and as such they were considered Iranian.

As this chapter has suggested, a more convincing resolution to the tensions inherent in the Iranian identity debate may emerge if we focus on premodern “Iran” having had *imperial*, rather than national or ethnic, connotations. In this important sense,

premodern “Iran” and “Iranian identity” must be seen as analogous to notions such as Rome and Roman, China and Chinese, and Ottoman, used as both imperial noun and adjective.

Powerfully articulated in *Khodaynameh* and *Shahnameh* traditions, a more or less coherent ideological conception of imperial Iran remained essential to the purposes of dynastic and imperial rule, serving even the formation of a modern Iranian nation-state. Until the 1978–79 revolution, the country’s official name was “The Imperial Government of Iran” (*Dowlat-e Shahanshahi-ye Iran*), while Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was to be officially addressed as “His Imperial Majesty, The *Shahanashah* (King of Kings).”⁸⁷ The imperial claim is manifest also in the term *Protected Domains/Kingdoms of Iran* (*mamalek-e mahruseh-e Iran*), the official name of the polity ruled by the Qajar Dynasty.⁸⁸ A significant break, however, was acknowledged when Iran’s 1906 constitution dropped the hollow-sounding imperial plural *mamalek* (kingdoms), replacing it with the singular *mamlekat*, only then standing for a unitary “country” that was to become the modern nation-state of Iran. Still, neither traditional nor recent and more critical scholarship has sufficiently focused on the crucial continuity and break between imperial and national conceptions of Iranian history and identity.⁸⁹

Almost all the sources cited in Ashraf’s discussion of Iranian identity in the medieval period convey a general sense of “Iran” as an empire—that is, as a plurality of kingdoms or dominions (*mamalek*). The historical paradigm of Iran as a multi-ethnic, multireligious, and multilingual empire, with a shifting “heartland” (*del-e Iranshahr*), as well as boundaries, is often explicit in both Orientalist and nationalist scholarship.⁹⁰ It is implicit too in the Persian-National paradigm, but obscured when empire is conflated with nation, and as Persian linguistic hegemony is assumed to have created ethnic and national homogeneity across history. Such conflation will be more difficult to maintain as recent scholarship, such as Parvaneh Pourshariati’s 2008 *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, strongly challenges long-standing conceptions of Sasanian Iran as a highly centralized empire.⁹¹ According to this new revisionist historiography, what Gnoli saw as a propagandistic Sasanian image of Iran as a cohesive empire significantly distorted the reality of a multifarious “confederacy,” tenuously held together despite profound political and religious differences and conflict. In other words, whatever this premodern paradigmatic model of imperial Iran might have been, it was nothing remotely similar to a modern nation-state.

EPILOGUE: THE DISENTANGLEMENT OF IMPERIAL AND NATIONAL HISTORY

An important conclusion emerging from the foregoing survey is the existence of common grounds between old and new scholarship on Iran and Iranian identity. The search for consensus, however, is better served if we abandon the essentialist “continuity” thesis and focus instead on how Iran, as a modern nation-state, and Iranian (national) identity, were crafted by the innovative recasting of premodern imperial notions. On the other hand, critical historiography can acknowledge the continuity of imperial paradigms linking post-Islamic dynasties to the Sasanians, and even further back to the Arsacids and Achamaenids. Understood as imperial archetypes, such notions of premodern Iran, and of Iranian identity, accord with Gnoli’s thesis, regarding the concept’s Sasanian origin, as well as with Fragner’s, on the hegemony of Persian as the language of imperial tradition and ideology.

However, conceptions of Iran and Iranian identity in terms of premodern racial, religious, linguistic, ethnic, territorial, and ultimately national uniformity are no longer viable. Such definitions are precisely the kind of modernist inventions that obscure a nation-state's break with the imperial traditions and ideologies of the past.

NOTES

1. For scholarly articles in Persian but appearing outside of Iran see *Iran Nameh* or *Iran Shenasi*, both published in the United States. Important studies published in Iran include Seyyed Javad Tabataba'i, *Dibacheh-i bar nazariyeh-e enbetat-e Iran* (Tehran: 2000); Reza Davari-Ardakani, *Dar bare-ye gharb* (Tehran: Hermes, 1999); Reza Bigdeli, *Bastangari dar tarikh-e mo'ser-e Iran* (Tehran: Markaz, 2000); Jamsahid Behnam, *Iranain va Andishe-ye tajadod* (Tehran: Farzan, 1996); Sadeq Ziaba-kalam, *Ma cheguneh ma shodim* (Tehran: Rozaneh, 1996). See also Iranian periodicals like *Tarikh-e mo'aser-i Iran*, or *Faslnameh-e motaleat-e tarikhi*; *Faslnameh-e motale'at-e melli*. (The latter publication, for instance, focuses on Iranian identity in its vol. 5, nos. 2 and 3 [2004], and vol. 9, no. 2 [2008]). For a recent collection of works on the same topic see Hamid Ahmadi, *Iran: Hoviyat, meliyat, qomiyat* (Tehran: Mo'asseseh-e tahqiqat va to'wse'e—ye 'olum-e ensani, 2006). This book includes an article by Ahmad Ashraf which basically restates the analysis presented in his 2006 *Encyclopaedia Iranica* entry on "Iranian Identity." Ashraf's article, as well as a few others, such as Ahmad Ahmadi's, include significant academic references, showing the decisive impact of English language scholarship. Surveys of the identity debate among Iranian Muslim intellectuals can be found in Hosayn Kaji, *Kisti-ye ma: az negah-e roshanfekran-e Irani* (Tehran: Rozaneh, 1999) and idem, *Ta'amat-e Irani: mababesi ba roshanfekran-e mo'aser dar zamane-ye fekr va farhang-e Irani* (Tehran: Rozaneh, 2000). For the postrevolutionary regime's official intervention in the Iranian identity debate, see Mas'ud Khorram, *Hoviyat* (Tehran: n.p. 1997).
2. A. Shapur Shahbazi, "The History of the Idea of Iran," in *Birth of the Persian Empire*, ed. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 1:100.
3. Other international academic institutions, and their periodicals, such as *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies*, published in the London, or *Studia Iranica* published in Paris, are devoted to studying Iran. None of these, however, has had the trend-setting impact of the *ISIS*, *Iranian Studies* or *Encyclopaedia Iranica*.
4. Jalal Khaleqi-Motlaq and Jalal Matini, "Iran dar gozasht-e rozgaran," in *Iranshenasi* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 233–68; Matini is quoted on p. 235.
5. In addition to the article cited above, see also Jalal Khaleqi-Motlaq, "Chand yaddasht bar maqale-ye Iran dar gozasht-e rozgaran," in *Iranshenasi* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 692–706, and "Chand yaddasht bar maqale-ye Iran dar gozasht-e rozgaran," in *Iranshenasi* 5, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 307–23.
6. Appearing in Persian and English on the inside covers of *Iranshenasi*, this phrase is advertised as the goal of Keyan Foundation, publisher of *Iranshenasi*.
7. Khaleqi-Motlaq and Matini, "Iran dar gozasht-e rozgaran," in *Iranshenasi* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 233–68; Khaleqi-Motlaq is quoted on pp. 237–38.
8. Ibid., 238; Numerous similar examples are found throughout this article.
9. See Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, "Self-Orientalization and Dislocation: The Uses and Abuses of 'Aryan' Discourse in Iran," *Iranian Studies* 44, no. 4 (July 2011): 445–72.
10. Ibid., 239. For sources on the debate on the historicity of nations and national identity see note no. 78.
11. Ibid., 241.
12. Jalal Khaleqi-Motlaq, "Chand yaddasht bar maqale-ye Iran dar gozasht-e rozgaran," in *Iranshenasi* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1993): 692–706; quoted on 697.

13. Jalal Khaleqi-Motlaq and Jalal Matini, "Iran dar gozasht-e rozgaran," in *Iranshenasi* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 233–68. Matini's section covers pp. 243–68.
14. Matini, "Iran dar gozasht-e rozgaran," 243–44.
15. *Ibid.*, 255–65.
16. *Ibid.*, 254.
17. *Ibid.*, 254–55.
18. *Ibid.*, 265–66.
19. "Symposium: Iranian Cultural Identity," *Iranian Studies* 26, nos. 1–2 (Winter–Spring 1993): 139–68. Silghtly modified Persian translations of articles by Yarshater and Ashraf were published in a special issue on "Iranian Identity" in *Iran Nameh* 12, no. 3 (summer 1984). Yarshater's article expanded on its 1993 *Iranian Studies* version, placing the historical appearance of Iranian identity in a Toynbee-style paradigm of decline and fall of civilizations. He still used references to "racial mixing," "national religion," and "linguistic purity" in ancient Iran. Here, the origin of Iranian identity is linked clearly to the time of "Aryan" invasions. See Ehsan Yarshater, "Hoviyat-e Irani dar gostare-ye tarikh," *Iran Nameh* 12, no. 3 (summer 1994): 1–3.
20. Ehsan Yarshater, "Persian Identity in Historical Perspective," *Iranian Studies* 26, nos. 1–2 (Winter–Spring 1993): 141–42.
21. Ahmad Ashraf, "The Crisis of National and Ethnic Identities in Contemporary Iran" in *ibid.*, 159–64.
22. Ehsan Yarshater, "Persian Identity in Historical Perspective," *Iranian Studies* 26, nos. 1–2 (Winter–Spring 1993): 141. The terms Yarshater has translated as "racial affiliation" were *ariyachicha*, which means "of Aryan stock." Making this a reference to "racial affiliation" is a legacy of Orientalist scholarship's constructing fallacious racial categories on the basis of philological discoveries. See Zia-Ebrahimi, "Self-Orientalization and Dislocation," 460.
23. *Ibid.*, 141.
24. *Ibid.*, 142.
25. *Ibid.*
26. See, for example, Ehsan Yarshater, "Iranian National History" in *Cambridge History of Iran* (1983): 359–477, and "The Persian Presence in Islamic World," in *The Persian Presence in Islamic World*, ed. Richard Hovannesian and George Sabbagh (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 4–125. The latter work was composed on the occasion of Yarshater's 1991 receiving of the prestigious Giorgio Levi Della Vida Award in Islamic Studies. The theme of Persian culture's exceptional predominance runs through this massive survey of scholarship in Islamic studies. The following passage is typical of Yarshater's generalizations: "The most vibrant and productive culture in the Islamic world for about six centuries was the Persian . . . until it was superseded by western notions and values of modern times." *Ibid.*, 89.
27. Bausani is cited in Ahmad Ashraf, "Iranian Identity," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, online, 2006, available at <http://www.iranica.com/>, p. 527. Bausani repeats his judgment on Reza Shah's "vacuous nationalism" in *The Persian*, trans. J. B. Donne (London: Elek Books, 1971), 179. He notes on page 177: "He tried to allay the people's discontent with nationalistic slogans which harked back to ancient pre-Islamic Persia rather than the Persia of Islamic tradition which was more historically and realistically related to the contemporary Persian scene."
28. On *Encyclopaedia Iranica*'s confusing policy of replacing "Iran" with "Persia" see Hamid Dabashi, *Iran: A People Interrupted* (New York: The New Press, 2007), 287. From the start *Iranian Studies* used "Persian" and "Iranian" interchangeably. See "By Way of Introduction," *Iranian Studies* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1967): 2–3. Similar confusions, and for similar reasons, have occurred in European history and historiography. For example, "British" and "English" identities have been constantly and wrongly equated with each other.

- Thus, as with “Persian,” the term “English” has often conflated linguistic and national identifications. See John Lie, *Modern Peoplehood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 153.
29. This hypothesis is quite widespread in academic literature. For an influential articulation see, for example, Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth: From Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran*, trans. Nancy Pearson (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).
 30. Shahrokh Meskoob, *Iranian Nationality, and the Persian Language*, trans. Michael Hillman (Washington, DC: Mage, 1992), 34.
 31. Shahrokh Meskoob, *Dastan-e adabiyat va sargozasht-e ejetma'* (Tehran: Farzan, 1994).
 32. Abd al-Hosayn Zarrinkub, preface to *Tarikh-e Iran ba'd az Eslām* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1984). See Ali-Reza Manafzadeh, “*Tarikh-e por Eftekhār*,” in *Negah-e No* 36 (May 1998), 121. See also Zarrinkub's collection of articles in *Nah sharqi, nah gharbi-Ensani* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1974).
 33. 'Abd al-Hosayn Zarrinkub, *Na sharqi, na gharbi-Ensani* (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1974), 45. Zarrinkub's lamentation, on the fall of antique Aryan civilizations to the Semitic religions of Christianity and Islam, echoes an earlier historiographic motif, found, for example, in Hasan Pirniya, *Iran-e bastan* (Tehran: Donya-ye ketāb, 1932), 1:21–22.
 34. Hamid Karimipur, “*'Abbas Eqbal Ashtiyani va hoviyyat-e Irani*,” in *Motale'at-e melli*, 4, no.2 (2003): 105–27; Eqbal Ashtiyani is quoted on pages 111–13.
 35. See the lead article by Abbas Eqbal-Ashtiyani in *Yadegar* 1, no. 1 (August–September 1944): 1–4.
 36. Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State, 1870–1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), 100.
 37. Karimipur, “*'Abbas Eqbal Ashtiyani va hoviyyat-e Irani*” and Huriyeh Sa'idi, “*Moqad-damehi bar seyr-e tahavvol-e ketābha-ye tarikh dar madāres*,” in *Tarikh-e mo'aser-e Iran* 4, nos. 13–14 (Spring–Summer 2000): 25–57.
 38. Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 100.
 39. Pirniya, *Iran-e bastan*, the section on “The Aryans: Their Iranian Branch,” 153–56. Quoted on page 153. Pirniya adds that of the 16 Avestan countries (*mamlekat*) the original Aryan “homeland” of *Airyan Vaejah* cannot be placed geographically, while almost all of the rest fall outside the Iranian plateau. Ibid., 156. On the significance of race, and particularly the “Aryan thesis,” in Orientalist scholarship see, for instance, Vasant Kaiwar and Sucheta Nazumdar, eds., *Antinomies of Modernity: Essays on Race, Orient, Nation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
 40. Pirniya, *Iran-e bastan*, 157–58.
 41. On Pirniya, see also Zia-Ebrahimi, “Self-Orientalization and Dislocation,” 455–56.
 42. Pirniya argues that all previous knowledge of “ancient Oriental history” has been turned “upside down” (*zir va zebar*) by a century of European “Orientalist” (*sharqshenasi*) scholarship. See *Iran-e bastan*, 64–65. On the significance of race to history see *ibid.*, 7–16.
 43. A. J. Arberry, ed., *The Legacy of Persia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), editor's preface, 1. First published in 1953, this collection of articles shows also the continuing predominance in historiography of fields such as linguists, archeology, and art history.
 44. Herzfeld contribution is noted in Ashraf, “Iranian Identity,” 527.
 45. On the significance of Christensen see Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2008). Briefly discussed later in the text, this work poses several significant challenges to existing paradigms in Iranian and Islamic historiography.
 46. Edward G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909* (Washington, DC: Mage, 1995), xiii.
 47. Gherardo Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on its Origins* (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il medio ed estremo oriente, 1989), 183.

48. Juan R. I. Cole, "Marking Boundaries, Marking Time: The Iranian Past and the Construction of the Self by Qajar Thinkers," *Iranian Studies* 29, nos. 1–2 (Winter/Spring 1996): 37.
49. Mostafa Vaziri, *Iran as Imagined Nation: The Construction of National Identity* (New York: Paragon House, 1993); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1990).
50. Vaziri uses "the Fabrication of an Iranian Identity," for example, in the title of his book's fifth chapter, p. 99. At other times, he is more circumspect in his overall claims. For instance: "I have tried to avoid the issue of nationality and to base my argument instead on the constructed historicity of Iranian identity. However, the Orientalist-constructed Iranian identity in its historical sense was in modern times used to forge an Iranian nationality in the world of nation-states." *Ibid.*, 217.
51. For example, Vaziri's book was dismissed in a brief footnote, 624–25, in Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi, "Tarikh-pardazi va Iran-ara'i," in *Iran Nameh* XII, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 583–628. Tavakoli-Targhi also reviewed this book negatively in *The International Journal of Middle East Studies* 26, no. 2 (May 1994): 316–18. For a more balanced review, see Afshin Matin-asgari, "Iran as Imagined Nation" in *Iranian Studies* 28, no. 3–4 (Summer/Fall 1995): 260–63.
52. Yarshater, "Hoviyat-e Irani dar gostare-ye tarikh," *Iran Nameh* 12, no. 3 (summer 1994), 3.
53. Poure Davoud, *Introduction to the Holy Gathas* (Bombay: Anjoman-e zartoshtian-e Iran, 1927), 3.
54. Mohammad-Hosein Forughi, *Tarikh-e Iran az avval-e tarikh ta konon, be sabk-e in asr va zaman*, see Tavakoli-Targhi, "Tarikh-pardazi va Iran-ara'i," 603.
55. Quoted in Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*, 81 (emphases added).
56. See the introductory essays by Amanat and Bonakdarian in Edward G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*, ed. Abbas Amanat (Washington, DC: Mage, 1995). See also Mansour Bonakdarian, *Britain and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006).
57. Quoting Browne himself, Amanat notes how, in "a remarkable case of 'intertextuality,'" *The Persian Revolution* and Nazim al-Islam's *Tarikh-e bidari-ye Iranian* have borrowed from and influenced each other. *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909*, xx–xxi.
58. See, for example, pages xix–xx in Browne's preface to *The Persian Revolution*, where all these neologisms are used and defended.
59. Amanat's introduction to Browne, *The Persian Revolution*, xiv, xxv–xxvi.
60. For recent scholarly commentaries on issues related to the Constitutional Revolution's historiography see *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 25, no. 2 (2005). Mangol Bayat's "The Tale of the Quchan Maidens as an "Originator" Event of the Constitutional Revolution" is most directly relevant to the problems posed by "the Browne Paradox." For a recent emphasis on the revolution's failure in breaking with "traditional" institutions, including Islam, see Mashallah Ajudani, *Mashruteh-e Irani* (Tehran: Akhtaran, 2003).
61. Tavakoli-Targhi, "Tarikh-pardazi va Iran-ara'i," 584. In his 1996 *Iranian Studies* article, Juan R. I. Cole had reached similar conclusions. See Juan R. I. Cole, "Marking Boundaries, Marking Time," especially p. 37.
62. *Ibid.*, 611.
63. *Ibid.*, 583. This theme, along with important new historiographic observations, were further expanded in Tavakoli-Targhi's later English language articles, collected in his *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Historiography* (New York: St. Anthony's/ Palgrave, 2001).
64. Mohammad-Ja'far Mahjub, "Goftar darbare-ye ba'zi farangan va mostafrangan," *Iran Nameh* XII, no. 4 (Fall 1994): 673–714, and Ahmad Karimi-Hakak, "Amuzgaran-e ma, Amukhteha va nayamukhteha-ye ma," in *ibid.*, 715–34. Mahjub quoted on page 697.

65. On Mahjub's communist background, see Shahrokh Meskoob, ed. *Ketab-e Morteza Keyvan* (Tehran: Nader, 2003), 113.
66. Fragner's arguments are cited in Ashraf, "Iranian Identity," 502.
67. "We must refer the invention or fiction that were characteristic features of the birth of the idea of Iran to the ideology rather than to the reality of the historical process." Ibid.
68. See Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran*, especially the conclusion, 175–83.
69. Gherardo Gnoli, "Iranian Identity: ii. Pre-Islamic Period" in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2006, available at <http://www.iranica.com/>, 504–7. Here, Gnoli's inconsistency continues and he even extends the term "Iranian" nation further back into the Achaemenid period. See 504.
70. Ahmad Ashraf, "Iranian Identity," *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2006, available at <http://www.iranica.com/>, 522.
71. Ibid., 9.
72. Ibid., 17.
73. Shahbazi, "The History of the Idea of Iran," 100–101.
74. Ibid., 3.
75. An early version of Ashraf's response appeared in his 1993 symposium paper and a lengthy 1994 *Iran Nameh* article.
76. Ashraf, "Iranian Identity," 501–2.
77. Ibid., 502 (emphasis added).
78. Here is a list sampling diverse perspectives: Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002); Joseph R. Liopera, *Foundations of National Identity* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2004); John Lie, *Modern Peoplehood* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986) and *Nationalism: Theory, Ideology, History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001) and *Ethnic Revival* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (London: Zed Books, 1993) and *The Nation and its Fragments* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1997); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Tom Narin, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London: Verso, 1997); Simon Schama, *Citizens* (London: Penguin, 1989); Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1979); John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, eds., *Ethnicity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) and *Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); John Armstrong, *Nations Before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Etienne Balibar and Emmanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1991); Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
79. For example those cited in the previous note.
80. "Iranian identity underwent a period of complex mutations with mixed consequences under the Saljuqids." Ashraf, "Iranian Identity," 513; "Iran regained its political unity and was given a new distinct religious identity under the Safavids." Ibid., 516; Or: "When the Iranian premodern society encountered the modern age of nationalism, it sought to create a new Iranian national identity on the basis of its own pre-existing ethnic and territorial ties, historical memories, and commemorations of historical events." Ibid., 523.

The argument that national or cultural identity remain the same against a background of massive historical change is a familiar one, discussed, for example, in Aziz Al-Azmah, *Islams and Modernities* (London: Verso, 1996). According to Al-Azmah, "The discourse on authenticity postulates a historical subject which is self-identical, essentially

in continuity over time, and positing itself in essential distinction from other historical subjects. For the viability of a historical subject such as this, it is essential that its integrity must be maintained against a manifest backdrop of change of a very rapid and profound nature." Ibid., 42. For another example, consider the following passage from French President Charles de Gaulle's 1971 memoir: "France has emerged from the depth of the past. She is a living entity. She responds to the call of the centuries. Yet she remains herself through time. Her boundaries may alter, but not the contours . . . Her land is inhabited by people who, in the course of history, have undergone the most diverse experiences, but whom destiny and circumstances, exploited by politics, have unceasingly molded into a single nation." Cited in Lei, *Modern Peoplehood*, 156.

81. Ashraf, "Iranian Identity," 503.
82. Ibid., 502.
83. This discussion is developed throughout Ashraf's section on "Medieval Islamic Period," ibid., 507–19.
84. See the geographers cited by Ashraf himself and by Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation, 1804–1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), chapter 1. For an update of the scholarly debate on the pre-Islamic geography of Iran see Franz Grenet, "An Archaeologist's Approach to Avestan Geography," in *Birth of the Persian Empire*, ed. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005), I:29–51.
85. Ashraf, "Iranian Identity," 508, 519.
86. Ashraf argues, for instance, that Iranian identity acquired a new popular culture aspect as it was linked to Shi'ism under the Safavids. He cites the observance of the Shi'i mourning ceremony of *Ashura*, alongside the older pre-Islamic *Nowruz*, as Iranian popular culture hallmarks. Several problems arise here. First, the Safavids converted their subjects in a forced "top down" fashion; and second, even by the twentieth century, this project was not successful at the level of tribes and/or folk religion. Ashraf makes the conversion something that "caught on" at the level of popular culture, because, he says, Shi'i ceremonies, like the *Ashura*, fitted with older Iranian popular culture patterns. Ashraf here relies on Meskoob's and Yarshater's claims about *Ashura* being amenable to the "Persian Soul" due to its similarity to pre-Islamic traditions, such as Mourning for Siavush. See Ashraf, "Iranian Identity," 518.
87. The last Shah's political magnum opus, *The White Revolution*, begins with a direct quote from Arthur Christensen on paradigmatic Iranian kingship and the monarch's status as the spiritual master, as well as political leader, of his subjects. See Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Engelab-e sefid* (Tehran: 1965), 2–3.
88. The same official designation was used by the Ottoman Empire. See Selim Deringil, *Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876–1909* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998).
89. For example, Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions*, often notes the imperial sense of designations such as *mamalek-e mabruseh-ye Iran*, *Iranshahr* and *Iranzamin*. Yet her analysis of premodern Iranian historical and geographic identity does not focus on the notion of empire. See especially her introduction and chapter 1. The same is true of Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran* and Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran*.
90. Even the most ardent advocates of Iran's ancient nationhood constantly and explicitly define historical Iran as an empire. See, for example, Shahbazi, "The History of the Idea of Iran," especially 102–103, where the author also cites scholarly references for the imperial notions of historical Iran.
91. Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*.

CHAPTER 9

IRAN AND IRAQ

INTERSOCIETAL LINKAGES AND SECULAR NATIONALISMS

H. E. CHEHABI

THE GEOGRAPHIC PROXIMITY BETWEEN IRAQ AND IRAN, their frequent association in discussions of the international politics of the eastern half of the Middle East, and perhaps even the fact that their respective names share three out of four letters, lead many who are not familiar with the Arabic alphabet to conflate if not confuse them. While the similarity in the names results only from their transliteration into Latin letters,¹ the semantic fields of Iran and Iraq do indeed overlap geographically. As a geographic area, Iranshahr used to refer to an area bound by the Euphrates in the West,² while Iraq used to refer to the entire region between the Syrian desert and the central deserts of Iran. To distinguish the predominantly Persian part of it (containing the historic cities of Hamadan, Isfahan, Kermanshah, and Rey) and its predominantly Arab part (most of the modern state of Iraq), they used to be called 'Eraq-e 'Ajam (i.e., Persian Iraq) and 'Eraq-e 'Arab (Arab Iraq), respectively. Until 1937 there was an Iranian province (*velayat*) called 'Eraq-e 'Ajam, and the toponym lives on in Persianized form in the town that used to be its capital, Arak, formerly Soltanabad-e 'Eraq, which is now the capital of Iran's Central Province.³ Furthermore, the people of Iran's northern Gilan province still call the rest of Iran (i.e., the plateau, as opposed to the Caspian lowlands) "'Eraq."⁴

In an effort to correct the Western public's presumed inability to differentiate sufficiently between the two, it is often asserted that Iraq and Iran could not be more different, the chasm between them being due to the fact that Iraqis are "Arabs" while Iranians are "Persians." The eight-year war between Iran and Iraq (1980–88), and the previous tensions between republican Iraq and Pahlavi Iran

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seem to be proof that no matter who governs in both countries, relations between the two are bound to be hostile—long periods of friendly relations, most importantly between 1937 and 1958, when the two countries were actually allied, being conveniently forgotten.⁵

Most analyses of the Iran-Iraq War begin by noting that the conflict was but a new manifestation of an ancient enmity between Arabs and Persians,⁶ uncritically echoing Saddam Hussein's war propaganda. The French journalist Paul Balta even went so far as to suggest that this "5000 year old" war had a racial character, as it opposed "Arabs and Persians, that is to say Semites and Aryans," which is somewhat bewildering coming from a man of the left.⁷ After the end of the war and the onset of "dual containment," emphasis on the deep chasm allegedly separating the two countries decreased, only to be resuscitated in the wake of the 2003 occupation of Iraq, when appeals to Arab resentment against Iran have been used to stiffen Iraqi resistance against Iranian influence and interference in post-Saddam Iraq. Thus in a newspaper article, the journalist Thomas Friedman asseverated that "hundreds of years of Mesopotamian history teach us that Arabs and Persians do not play well together"; that there exists a "natural antipathy and competition between Iraqi Arabs and Iranian Persians"; and that Iran and Iraq "did not fight a war for eight years by mistake, or just because Saddam was in power."⁸

While a majority of Iraqis would wholeheartedly agree that they are an Arab nation, and while a majority of Iranians conceive of their country as Persian, my contention in this chapter is that this distinction must not be essentialized. The fact that three-quarters of Iraqis are Arabs and that Persian culture defines Iranian-ness—both for Persian speakers and for most speakers of other languages—does not in and of itself mean that the two peoples are *essentially* different or genetically programmed not to get along. To demonstrate my contention, I will first show that to a certain degree the "Arabness" of Iraq and the "Persianness" of Iran are ideological constructs, as both states have multiethnic populations, including groups that are present on both sides of the border. More importantly, in both countries a majority of the population adheres to Twelver Shi'ism, which creates another bond between them. Having relativized the primordialist approach to the relationship between the two countries, I will go further and show that the two societies' cultures contain many common elements. After that I will address the issue of Iraqi and Iranian nationalism and show that the Othering of neighbors is in fact a relatively recent phenomenon and does not have ancient roots. To drive home this last point, I will end by reviewing Arab-Persian relations through the ages, arguing that contrary to much conventional wisdom they have not been *essentially* characterized by hostility.

THE COMMUNITIES

If we keep the ethnic and religious diversity of Iraq and Iran in mind, we will find that many communities can be found in both countries, acting in effect like straps that keep the two societies bound together. The fact that ethnic and political boundaries do not coincide is of course nowise remarkable, for they rarely do, even in Europe, the cradle of the idea that they *should* coincide. All over the world we find ethnic communities that straddle international borders. What is unique about Iraq and Iran is that the communities have been linked so closely that individuals have passed readily from one side of the border to the other to be politically active

in both countries. In prenational societies it was not rare for ambitious individuals to offer their services to a foreign ruler and embark on a political career in a state other than the one in which they were born,⁹ but matters are different in modern nation-states, where exclusive loyalty is expected to be given to the *nation* rather than to the *ruler*. It is therefore remarkable and indicative of the societal linkages between Iraq and Iran that a number of individuals have played a political role in *both* countries.

Let us now look at the ethnography of the Iraq-Iran frontier from the Turkish border to where the Shatt al-Arab flows into the Persian Gulf. The mountains northeast of the Mesopotamian plain are home to two peoples that straddle the border between modern-day Iraq, Iran, and Turkey: Kurds and Assyrians.

KURDS

Kurds number about twenty million and can be found in Turkey, Syria, and Armenia as well. The "Kurdish nation" is in many ways a modern nationalist construct rather than a primordial group, as Kurds speak a variety of dialects that are to some extent mutually unintelligible, and one of these, Zaza, is increasingly classified as a separate language altogether;¹⁰ it is Modern Kurdish nationalism that has redefined them as dialects of a single language.¹¹ One religious subgroup of the Kurds, the Yezidis, can also be found in Iraq and Iran (and also Turkey and Armenia).¹²

The Kurdish leader Mulla Mustafa Barzani (1903–79) was a prime example of a border-straddling political figure. Born in the Iraqi village of Barzan in 1903, he participated in Kurdish uprisings against the new Iraqi state in the 1930s and early 1940s, and when that movement was suppressed at the end of World War II, he led one thousand Kurdish fighters and their families to Iran. Here he was made commander-in-chief of the army of the Kurdish republic that had been set up under Soviet protection in parts of Iran's Western Azerbaijan province.¹³ Upon the demise of that government, he fled to the Soviet Union but returned to Iraq in 1958, resuming his struggle in 1974, with generous support from the Iranian government he had fought in 1946. When the shah and Saddam Hussein made peace in Algiers in 1975, he and many of his followers sought refuge in Iran, where he was buried after he died in the United States in 1979. Upon the end of Iraqi governmental control over northern Iraq in the wake of the Gulf War, his body was exhumed, taken back across the border, and reburied in Barzan in 1993.¹⁴ His son Masud, since 2005 president of Iraqi Kurdistan's regional government, was born in Mahabad, the Iranian city that had served as the capital of the Kurdish republic, in 1946. Another Kurd who was prominent in both countries was Shaykh Osman Naqshbandi, an Iraqi citizen who lived in Iran. He had many followers in Kurdistan, Azerbaijan, and Gorgan, and was friends with the last Shah's influential minister of the court, Amir Asadollah Alam.¹⁵

During the Iran-Iraq War, the Ba'athist regime's struggle against the Islamic Republic and the revived Kurdish insurgency in Iraq fused, so much so that toward the end of the war chemical weapons were used both against occupying Iranian troops on the south and against Iraqi Kurdish civilians in Halabja,¹⁶ not to mention the meticulously planned pogrom known as the *Anfal* Campaign, in the course of which close to two hundred thousand Kurds were massacred in Iraq.

The establishment of an autonomous Kurdish administration in northern Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War has had a deep effect on Iranian Kurds. The mountainous northern part of the border between Iran and Iraq is difficult if not impossible to patrol, and traffic of people, goods, and weapons has been intense. People on the Iranian side of the border are well aware of what goes on in northern Iraq and watch Iraqi Kurdish television stations whose programming is not only in their own language but also more entertaining than the dreary fare shown on Iranian television. Iranian Kurds by and large supported the reformist movement headed by President Mohammad Khatami (1997–2005), who adopted a more conciliatory policy toward Iran's Sunnis and named a widely respected Kurdish academic as one of his advisors on Sunni affairs. When the reform movement fizzled out, however, while in neighboring Iraq a Kurdish leader, Jalal Talabani, became state president, many Iranian Kurds began saying that in Iraq a Kurd can become president whereas in Iran Kurds cannot even become provincial governor.¹⁷ James Rosenau's notion of "linkage politics" clearly applies to Kurdish politics in Iraq and Iran.¹⁸

ASSYRIANS AND CHALDAEANS

The people who are known today as Assyrians and Chaldeans are the descendants of Mesopotamia's ancient Christian populations. As a French scholar of Middle Eastern Christianity put it, in Iran their "history is not distinguishable from that of the Iraqi and Turkish branch of the community, whose ancestral territory overlaps largely with that of the Kurds."¹⁹ The Assyrians of Iran formed up to a third of the population of the area situated between Lake Urmia and the Turkish border up to the first decade of the twentieth century, but they were embroiled in the civil strife that accompanied World War I and fell victim to a pogrom during World War I, after which most of the survivors left the area.²⁰ In Ottoman Iraq Assyrians were likewise under pressure in World War I, and the Patriarch of the Church of the East led Assyrian tribes who were under attack to Iran. Of the 120,000 Assyrians or so, 50,000 received permission to enter Iran, but the patriarch was assassinated by Simko, chief of the Shakak Kurds, a notorious bandit whom some Kurdish nationalists claim as a forebear.

In the 1970s Assyrians on both sides of the border again became embroiled in tensions between the Ba'athist and Pahlavi regimes. Radio Urmia broadcast in Assyrian to Assyrians in Iraq, inciting them to join the Kurdish rebellion. Many did, and among these many were executed by Saddam. In Iraq, the Assyrian Democratic Movement (Zowaa) starved in the mountains and activists occasionally came over to Urmia, while Iranian Assyrians would go over the ill-defined border to take food to them. When Saddam Hussein and the shah made peace in 1975, many Iraqi Assyrians left to live in Urmia or Tehran.²¹

OTHER BORDER COMMUNITIES

South of the Kurds and Assyrians, the Shi'i Arabs who comprise the largest group in Iraq also inhabit adjacent areas of Iran in the plain of Khuzistan, which is geographically a continuation of the Mesopotamian plain.²² Dispersed among them at the mouth of the river we find another community that straddles it, namely that of the gnostic Mandaean or Sabaeans.²³ This community is so small that the almost

incessant warfare of the last three decades in their area of settlement has threatened their very survival as a community.²⁴

Kurds, Assyrians, Shi'i Arabs, and Mandaeans are communities that have since ancient times lived on both sides of the current border between Iraq and Iran. However, they are not the only ethnic or religious groups that can be found in both countries. Let us now consider ethnic and religious groups present in both countries that do not inhabit a continuous territory straddling the border. Among these, Jews are the most ancient.

JEWIS

Arab and Iranian (and Central Asian) Jews are jointly referred to as Mizrahi (Eastern) Jews, and among these the Jews of Iraq and Iran share a history going back to Babylonian times. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the two communities maintained contact through trade, religious studies, and intermarriage. When the Paris-based Alliance Israélite Universelle established schools in Iran in the late nineteenth century, it was because the Jews of Hamadan and Tehran had made contact with its headquarters through the school the Alliance had established in Baghdad in 1864.²⁵

During World War I many Iraqi Jews relocated to Iran to avoid Ottoman conscription,²⁶ and following the pogrom (*Farhud*) of 1940,²⁷ about ten thousand Iraqi Jews fled to Iran,²⁸ where they were given passports by the Iranian government. These Iraqi Jews maintained their Arab language and culture at home but also became acculturated into the wider Iranian culture, effecting a Judeo-Arabo-Persian synthesis. The lasting contribution of this "minority within a minority" to larger society was the highly regarded Etefaq School in Tehran, which was founded by an Iraqi immigrant to Iran, Abdullah Mayer Basun.²⁹

TWELVER SHI'ISM

All these crossborder bonds pale in comparison with the ties that bind about 90 percent of Iranians to about 55 percent of Iraqis, namely their common adherence to Twelver Shi'ism of the Usuli variety. The gradual conversion of most of the inhabitants of Iran to Twelver Shi'ism under the Safavids (1501–1722), and later the large-scale conversion of Arab tribes in southern Iraq to that creed in the nineteenth century, further cemented the cultural affinities between the Mesopotamian lowlands and the Iranian plateau to its east.³⁰ The shrine cities of Iraq (Najaf, Karbala, Kazimayn, Samarra, collectively known as the *'atabat*) had been the center of Twelver Shi'ism from the beginning, but under the Safavids Iranian cities such as Isfahan supplanted them as centers of learning. The *'atabat* regained their preeminence in the eighteenth century, when many Iranian *ulama* flocked to them as a result of the political upheavals following the demise of the Safavids. The establishment of telegraph lines in the 1860s allowed Iranian believers to be in close contacts with the religious authorities in Ottoman Iraq, and by the late nineteenth century high-ranking Shi'i clerics in Najaf were playing influential roles in Iranian politics, as seen in the Tobacco Rebellion of 1891–92, when a ruling of Samarra-based Mohammad Hasan Shirazi forced Naser al-Din Shah to cancel a concession that had granted the handling and commercialization of tobacco to a British company,

and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–11, when Persian *ulama* in Najaf provided religious legitimation for representative government.³¹ The close connection of Iranians with the shrine cities had demographic consequences for Iraq, as it added a new element to the ethnic mosaic of the area.

THE PERSIAN PRESENCE IN IRAQ

Beginning in the eighteenth century, thousands of Shi'i Iranians flocked to Iraq, establishing themselves in the *'atabat*.³² While Najaf retained an Arab character, Iranians constituted three quarters of Karbala's population at the beginning of the twentieth century. Under the Ottomans, Iranians maintained a flourishing community in Iraq and even enjoyed the privilege of extraterritorial jurisdiction exercised by Iranian consular officials.³³ Many Shi'i Arabs took Iranian nationality to avoid being conscripted into the Ottoman army. When the Iraqi state was set up, those Arabs who were Iranian subjects but now opted to become citizens of the new state were given a different status, which openly and legally discriminated against them. While former subject of the Ottoman Empire became "authentic" (*asli*) citizens, those who had been Iranian subjects became "inauthentic" citizens,³⁴ a status their children inherited—with nefarious consequences, as we shall see.

Under the Hashemites, citizens of Iran maintained their community life in Iraq, helped by the gradual improvement of relations between the Iraqi and the Iranian states that culminated in the signing of the Saadabad Pact (together with Turkey and Afghanistan) in 1937.³⁵ Two men who exemplify the degree of social insertion of this community were Muhammad Mahdi Jawahiri (1899–1997), a Persian from Najaf, and Mohammad Ja'far Salmasi (1916–1990), Iran's first Olympic gold medal winner. The first became a famous Arab poet, but in spite of his fame was denied a position as a teacher by Sati' al-Husri, a Yemen-born Syrian who had become a high-level Iraqi educational official.³⁶ The second fared better: born in Kazimayn, he attended an Iranian elementary school in his home town and then Iraqi Arabic-medium high schools in Baghdad, where he developed an interest in gymnastics. In 1944 he visited Tehran, where he became acquainted with the discipline of weight lifting, in which he won a gold medal in London in 1948. After that he divided his time between Iran and Iraq, where he taught physical education, some of his pupils becoming international medal winners for Iraq. It was only after the republican regime that came to power after the overthrow of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958 made life difficult for Iranians that he moved permanently to Iran. It is interesting to note that in response to an Iranian interviewer who asked him this loaded question: "Since Iraqis as a matter of principle do not get along with Iranians, did they ever cause you trouble or hurt you?" He answered that they had always treated him with respect and friendliness, and there was no cause for worry.³⁷

A somewhat less edifying case of a binational career was that of Ali Asghar Borujerdi who was born in Borujerd, moved to Karbala when he was eight, and thence to Baghdad six years later. In Iraq he abused and killed 25 boys, and his last murder almost triggered Sunni-Shi'i communal violence in Baghdad. He narrowly escaped to Tehran in 1933, where he killed eight more boys, but he was arrested and publicly hanged in 1934, having gained immortality of a sort under the sobriquet Asghar Qatel (Asghar the Murderer).³⁸

BINATIONAL *ULAMA*

Members of the Iranian community frequently intermarried with urban Arab Shi'is, and were in fact bicultural. What had attracted many Iranians to Iraq was the presence there of the Shi'i centers of learning. Many clerical families had branches in both countries, the most prominent of whom being the Sadr family, which originated in the Jabal Amil (now southern Lebanon). In 1929 Muhammad al-Sadr, an Iraqi *mujtahid*, became president of Iraq's senate and then briefly prime minister in 1948.³⁹ Another member of the family was his grand-nephew Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, a major *mujtahid* who was killed by Saddam in 1980. Most recently, Muqtada al-Sadr rose to political prominence in the wake of Saddam Hussein's ouster in 2003. The Iranian branch of the family also produced distinguished *ulama*. Muhammad al-Sadr's cousin, Ayatollah Sadr al-Din Sadr, was a major *mujtahid* in Qom, and one of his sons, Musa, went on to a remarkable career in Lebanon.⁴⁰ The presence of so many Iranians in the shrine cities has left a mark on Iranian onomastics, as the surnames Gharavi and Ha'eri mean hailing from Najaf and Karbala, respectively.

The aftermath of World War I saw a rise of British influence in both Iran and Iraq, the demise of Ottoman and Qajar rule in Iraq and Iran, and the establishment of governments in Iraq and Iran that propagated Arab and Persian nationalism, marginalizing the Shi'i clergy in the process. For this reason in the 1910s and 1920s Iraq and Iran constituted two arenas in the same battle for many *ulama*.⁴¹

The largely Shi'i anti-British uprising of 1920, which may have been partially motivated by clerical opposition to the Anglo-Persian treaty of 1919,⁴² led to the expulsion to Iran in 1923 of the three leading *mujtahids* of Iraq, two Iranian and one Arab, under a recently passed law that permitted the expulsion of "foreigners" who engaged in antigovernment activity. The Arab among the three was Shaykh Mahdi al-Khalisi, who was born in Kazimayn in 1861 into an Arab family but later took Iranian nationality. Later the Iraqi government allowed the three to return if they promised to abstain from political activity, and in light of the supposed historical animosity between Arabs and Persians it is interesting to note that the two Iranians went back to Najaf while Ayatollah Khalisi remained in Iran, dying in Mashhad in 1925.⁴³ Khalisi's son, Muhammad (1888–1963), who had preceded his father to Iran in 1922, took the name Khalesizadeh (in Persian: son of Khalesi) and became active on Iran's political scene: when in 1924 clerics opposed the idea of replacing the Qajar monarchy with a republic headed by the prime minister, Reza Pahlavi, he was one of the leaders of the antirepublican movement. Subsequently he spent much of Reza Shah's reign in jail or under house arrest on account of his opposition to the shah's secularizing policies. He resumed his publicistic activities in 1941, penning an apologia for veiling in 1948. He returned to Iraq in 1949, where he became a leading figure in the *taqrib* movement, which sought a rapprochement with Sunnis.⁴⁴

Another veteran of the anti-British uprising of 1920 who later became prominent in Iranian politics was Ayatollah Abu al-Qasem Kashani (1882–1963), an early protégé of Mahdi Khalisi.⁴⁵ Born in Kazimayn, he was expelled from Iraq in 1920, went to Iran, and became an important figure in Iranian politics after World War II, organizing, for instance, a major anti-Israel demonstration in 1948. Accused of being a ringleader of an assassination attempt on the shah in early 1949, he was

exiled to Lebanon, where he was frequently visited by admirers from both Iran and Iraq.⁴⁶ In 1950 he was allowed to return to Iran, where he became the main ally of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq, until he broke with the nationalist leader in early 1953, facilitating the coup of August 1953.⁴⁷

In our own time, Ayatollah Mahmud Hashemi Shahrudi exemplifies this binationalism. Born and raised to a family of Persian origin in Iraq, he went to Iran soon after the Iranian revolution and became the vice president of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), a major anti-Saddam party headquartered in Iran. He then resigned from the position in 1999 to become the head of Iran's judiciary, a position he held until 2009.

One would be hard pressed to find other pairs of countries in which so many individuals have played a political role in both. The only two examples that I can think of are Ralf Dahrendorf, who, having been elected to the lower house of the German parliament in 1969, was named to the upper house of the British parliament in 1993, and Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who was born of German parents in France, and became a German Member of the European Parliament in 1994 and a French one in 1999.⁴⁸ But here we are dealing with countries that have pooled their sovereignty in the European Union and that grant each other's citizens voting rights for local elections, which is very different from the relationship between the Iraqi and Iranian states, states that in theory demand an exclusive commitment from their citizens.

Within Twelver Shi'ism, a tension is often diagnosed between Persian and Arab clerics in Iraq.⁴⁹ What is not demonstrated, however, is that ethnicity is the origin of these tensions. After all, competition and family feuding are not unknown among the *ulama* of Qom and Mashhad in Iran and among those of the various shrine cities in Iraq. It is well known that in the latter the tensions between the Hakim and Sadr families go back many centuries, their most recent manifestation being the post-2003 rivalry between the Badr Brigades of Baqir al-Hakim and the Army of the Mahdi loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr. The fact remains that since the early twentieth century, when *ulama* have been under pressure from the authorities in one country, they have gone to the other, regardless of ethnic affinities—most famously Ayatollah Khomeini, who lived in Najaf from 1965 to 1978. In our own time, it is, after all, an Iranian, Ayatollah Sistani, who has emerged as the main *marja'* of the Iraqis. And Muqtada al-Sadr, who has the reputation of an Arab nationalist hostile to Iran, went to Qom to further his studies in 2007 when he came under political pressure at home.

While Arab Shi'is have come into their own as a result of Lebanese and Iraqi Shi'is having gained a political weight commensurate with their numbers,⁵⁰ some of their distancing from Iranian Shi'ism is due to the domination of the Iranian seminaries by the theocratic state ideology of *velayat-e faqih/wilayat al-faqih*, to which many Iranian *ulama* are opposed as well. Moreover, from a Lebanese perspective Iraq and Iran at times seem to be more similar to each other than Iraq is to Lebanon. Thus Shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams al-Din, who for many years headed Lebanon's Supreme Shi'i Islamic Council, in a book on the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, a key event in Shi'i history, mentions Iran and Iraq in tandem on a number of occasions, as though he were equally distant from them.⁵¹

The Twelver Shi'i social milieu spanning the Ottoman Empire and Iran in the nineteenth century also facilitated the emergence of two religious movements whose adherents can be found in both Iran and Iraq today.

SHAYKHIS

The Twelver Shi'i community known as Shaykhi has adherents in the countries surrounding the Persian Gulf as well as Pakistan. Its founder was Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i (1753–1826), an Arab Shi'i cleric from Eastern Arabia who migrated to the *'atabat* in the 1790s and, traveling extensively in the area, attracted a personal following in his homeland, southern Iraq, and Iran, where he settled in 1806. His successor, the Iranian-born Seyyed Kazem Rashti, spent most of his time in Karbala, and it is under his leadership that the followers of the Shaykh came to form a separate religious community.⁵² After Seyyed Kazem Rashti's death, the community underwent a number of splits, but the most important branch came to be centered in Kerman, where its spiritual leader resided. When the head of the sect, 'Abd al-Reza Ebrahimi, was assassinated in the wake of the Iranian revolution in 1981, the leadership shifted to an Arab *'alim* in Basra, Sayyid Ali Musawi, who named the son of the assassinated leader as his representative (*wakil*) for the Iranian branch of the community. Throughout the Iran-Iraq War, Iranian Shaykhis maintained discreet contact with their Arab head in Basra.⁵³

BAHA'IS

It was in Karbala that a young merchant from Shiraz, Mirza Ali Mohammad (1819–50) joined the circle around Seyyed Kazem Rashti, the leader of the nascent Shaykhi community. In due course Mirza Ali Mohammad took the title Bab and founded a religion of his own, attracting the allegiance of many Shaykhis.⁵⁴ Most Babis later joined the new Baha'i religion, whose founder was a Babi named Mirza Hoseyn 'Ali Nuri, known as Baha'ullah (1817–92). Faced with mounting anti-Babi repression in Iran, Baha'ullah went to Baghdad with his family in 1853, and there organized the Babi communities in Iraq and Iran:

Located in an area of major Shi'i pilgrimage and yet not living under Iranian jurisdiction, Baha'ullah was well situated to construct such a network. If necessary under the guise of Shi'i pilgrims, Iranian Babis could travel to visit Baha'ullah, taking with them letters and questions from their coreligionists and returning with the replies. Such Babi travellers, together with couriers specially dispatched by Baha'ullah, could visit other localities *en route* and thus bring together the various local groups. Possessed again of a single and effective centre to which the whole community could turn, the Babis appear to have rallied and to have gradually constituted themselves as a religious movement.⁵⁵

It was in a garden near Baghdad that Baha'ullah announced his prophethood in 1863,⁵⁶ and his followers came to be known as Baha'is. The event is commemorated by adherents of the religion in the annual Ridvan feast, the most important in the Baha'i liturgical calendar, but Iran is considered *mahd-e amrollah* (cradle of the cause of God) for being the land in which the Baha'i faith's precursor, Babism,

originated. The close association between Iraq and Iran for Baha'i spirituality can also be seen in the fact that the Baha'i pilgrimage consists of visits to the Bab's house in Shiraz (torn down in 1979) and to Baha'ullah's house in Baghdad.

It would seem that among all the ethnic and religious communities of Iraq and Iran only Iraq's Sunnis and Iran's Zoroastrians share no cultural references. The latter are so few in number that they would not matter for the purposes of this chapter, which is concerned with the intersocietal linkages between the two countries, were it not for the fact that prerevolutionary Iranian nationalism, whose effects survived the revolution, is infused with nostalgia for all things Zoroastrian. Iraq's Sunni Arabs matter much more, and they would seem to have no specific cultural ties with Iranians—although one might point out that the epicenter of Sunni spirituality in Baghdad, a city whose name means “God-given” in Middle Persian, is the shrine of 'Abd al-Qadir al-Jaylani, founder of the Qadiriya order of Sufism, a man who was born in Gilan and went to Baghdad at the age of 18.

CULTURAL AFFINITIES

Given these extensive cultural transnational ties between Iraq and Iran, it is not astonishing that the everyday cultures of the two countries should evince many common elements. This can be seen even in language, the marker par excellence of the two countries' distinctiveness.

LANGUAGE

Persian has of course a great many Arabic loanwords,⁵⁷ and while classical Arabic has far fewer Persian loanwords,⁵⁸ vernacular Iraqi Arabic has many more of them than classical Arabic, to the point where the voiceless bilabial stop and the voiceless palatal affricate, which do not occur in classical Arabic, are not considered foreign.⁵⁹ A word containing both is *pacha*, the ubiquitous street food of Baghdad, which comes from Persian *kalleh-pacheh*, meaning (sheep's) head and trotters. Which brings us to culinary culture.

CUISINE

The cuisine of Iraq, especially as practiced by urban Shi'is and Jews, resembles that of Iran far more than that of Syria and the Levant, which use meat more sparingly, for instance.⁶⁰ In both countries rice is steamed after it has been parboiled, and the burnt crust of rice at the bottom of the cooking pot (*hakaka* in Iraq, *tahdig* in Iran) is considered a delicacy and served separately. Many of the stews (*marga* in Iraqi Arabic, *khoresht* in Persian) that accompany the white rice are common to both countries, such as *fesenjan*, which is based on the combination of pomegranate paste and walnuts, or *qimat al-Husayn/qeymeh*, which is prepared with split peas.⁶¹ As the author of a suggestively titled cookbook wrote in her introduction, “I was born in Baghdad and spent some time in Teheran . . . Throughout these years I enjoyed the same cuisine because political boundaries do not erase cultural, especially culinary, ties.”⁶²

ARCHITECTURE

In architecture we also find certain similarities, due to the same shape Twelver Shi'i mosques and shrines take in both countries. The domes, courtyards, and decorative panels of Najaf, Karbala, and Kazimayn resemble those of Mashhad, Qom, and Jupar far more than those of Cairo or Damascus. As Helen Philon explains, "In considering the Islamic architecture of Iraq we view, by necessity, the dynasties that sponsored these monuments, covering a period of the 7th to the 15th centuries, ending at a time when, finally, Iranian influences became overwhelming."⁶³

What is interesting is that, if the author is correct, Iranian influence became "overwhelming" at a time when the current western border of Iran took shape, as the Safavids and their successors in Iran never ruled Iraq, except for very short periods, which means that the influence was not due to political domination. Nor were earlier Iranian influences on Iraqi architecture due to Persian conquests: "The architecture of the early 'Abbasids was coloured by pre-Islamic Iranian influences; the adoption of the Iranian concept of kingship, coupled with the concern for political security, contributed to the creation of the three royal cities of Baghdad, Samarra, and Roqqa."⁶⁴

MUSIC

In the realm of classical music, the close kinship between classical Arabic and Persian (not to mention Turkish) music, based on the *maqam* and the *dastgah*, respectively, has often been pointed out. Until the sixteenth century, Iranian and Arab music were part of the same tradition, which can be seen in the existence of Arab *maqams* with Persian names (Nahawand, Isfahan, Rast) and Persian *gushehs* with Arabic names (Hejaz, Hoseyni, Mansuri). The advent of the Safavid dynasty in Iran curtailed personal contacts between Arab and Iranian musicians, as a result of which Iranian music began to evolve separately.⁶⁵ But in Iraq classical music continued evincing many common traits with that of Iran.⁶⁶ The typical Iraqi ensemble "lacks the *qanun* and may exclude the '*ud*' (zither and lute, respectively), two instruments that are "elsewhere in the Arab world . . . the leading instruments of classical music," but feature the *santur* (dulcimer) and *ney* (reed flute), two instruments widely used in Iran. The poems sung on the occasion of performing a *maqam* include not only Arabic verse but also translations of Omar Khayyam and Hafiz. Moreover, "Aramaic, Hebrew, Turkmen, Persian, Armenian, and Turkish texts occasionally occur as well." As the ethnomusicologist here quoted put it, these common elements constitute "an example of the close ties between the culture of the Mesopotamian lowlands and the Iranian highlands. In fact, the great desert to the west of Mesopotamia was often a stronger barrier to cultural continuity than the Persian mountain ranges to the east."⁶⁷ No wonder that at the height of the Iraq-Iran war a British social worker found that a cassette store in Ramadi, a largely Sunni Arab town, "stocked a range of Iranian music."⁶⁸

ATHLETICS

Traditional athletics as practiced in gymnasiums called in Persian *zurkhanehs* (Houses of Strength) are another example of common cultural traits. They were

introduced into Ottoman Iraq in the 1830s and survived until the early days of the republic, when the state attempted to replace them with international sports.⁶⁹ They were revived after 2003. Perhaps it is an echo of Iraqi *zurkhanehs* that wrestling, which used to be the main exercise in the traditional gymnasias, remains popular in Iraq, although in the context of the Middle East that sport is more readily identified with Iranians and Turks.⁷⁰

MUHARRAM RITUALS

Another cultural form often identified with Iran is the passion play that reenacts the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, called *ta'zieh* in Persian.⁷¹ Iraqi Shi'is did not have to learn veneration of the 12 Imams from the Iranians, and so it is not surprising that these passion plays were readily adopted by Iraqis and came to form part of Iraqi Shi'i identity.⁷² The flagellation rituals common during the mourning month of Muharram are widely popular among Shi'is in both Iran and Iraq (although they probably originated in neither of them), and when they were criticized as an innovation by the Lebanese scholar Muhsin al-Amin al-Amili, his challenge to age-old practices brought forth a polemic in which scholars from both countries, Arab and Persian, united to condemn the scholar from the distant Mediterranean shore.⁷³

While music does not have a communal dimension, the Iraqi *zurkhanehs*, Muharram rituals, and some culinary practices are obviously part of Iraq's Shi'i subculture, and to the extent that the "national" culture of Iraq was disproportionately (but of course not exclusively) defined by its Sunni Arab ruling strata, the common elements in the two countries' cultures did not generate a positive evaluation of the affinities here shown. By the same token, proponents of a quintessentially "Persian" national culture of Iran can easily dismiss the common elements as evidence of Arab cultural borrowing from a "superior" Iranian culture. For the fact is that border-straddling ethnic and religious communities and many cultural affinities notwithstanding, four score years of nationalist indoctrination by the Iraqi and Iranian states and their respective modern intelligentsias have led to the internalization of nationalist constructs and myths whose effect on mutual perceptions (and, ultimately, state-to-state relations) it would be Pollyannaish to deny. To these constructs we must now turn.

IRANIAN AND IRAQI NATIONALISMS

Since roughly the beginning of the twentieth century, Iranian state elites have posited that Persian language and culture are what the Iranian nation is based on, replacing a territorial conception of Iran prevalent previously.⁷⁴ From the outset, this new Iranian nationalism was defined in contradistinction to Arabs. This was a convenient way for secularists to criticize Islam without saying so, as that religion had been brought to Iran by Arabs but was (and is) still adhered to by the overwhelming majority of Iranians. One of the founders of modern Iranian secular nationalism, Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, depicted Arabs as "ignorant, savage lizard-eaters, bloodthirsty, barefoot, camel riders, desert-dwelling nomads, who, prior to the Prophet's advent, lived from theft, raid and murder." Since the Arab conquests, he wrote, Iranians had lost their good looks, their proud and happy faces, and their elegant and well-shaped figures.⁷⁵ The view of the Arab as the constitutive *Other*

gained currency among much of the secular Iranian middle class, brought up on history text books that glorified pre-Islamic Iran,⁷⁶ and reading modern writers and essayists that excoriated Arabs.⁷⁷ These nationalism-inspired prejudices easily connected with premodern negative views of the "Arab," secular Iranians failing to realize that the connotation of *'arab* (and especially its broken plural, *a'rab*) in prenationalist times was that of a rustic Bedouin, not the sophisticated city-dwellers of Baghdad, Damascus, or Cairo, who probably shared the Persians' view of *a'rab*.⁷⁸ Appreciation and respect for the culture of urban Arabs also declined as the state educational system deemphasized the teaching of the Arabic language, which had never been foreign to educated Iranians.⁷⁹ It is only when European notions of nationalism fused with a preexisting consciousness of cultural distinctiveness that in the Iranian mind the Arab nomad of the desert became conflated with all those who speak Arabic.

In Iraq, too, demarcation from Iran was a key point in the Arab nationalism propagated by the state elites, who, being mostly Sunni, had few overarching ties with Iranians. The largely Shi'i uprising of 1920 marginalized Iraq's majority community politically, and given the close cultural and religious ties of that community with Iran, anti-Iranianism became a front for anti-Shi'ism. That the Iranian state did not recognize Iraq until 1929, arguing that it was not truly sovereign, and insisted on keeping extraterritorial capitulations for its citizens at a time when it was denouncing the capitulations European powers enjoyed in Iran, did not help matters. The euphemism for Iranian and Shi'i was *shu'ubi*, a term that originally referred to a ninth-century literary movement that had extolled the cultural merits of non-Arabs,⁸⁰ but that came to connote anybody suspected of not being totally committed to the Arab nation—including many Arab Shi'is.⁸¹

One common theme in Iranian and Iraqi nationalist constructs is that the other country is in league with one's enemies, meaning the West. The idea that foreign governments are puppets of the major powers is of course endemic in the Middle East.⁸² The Iranian historian Fereydon Adamiyat furnishes a good example of this where he writes, "Those who have studied the recent history of Iran have noticed that repeatedly [specially] trained persons have been sent to Iran from Mesopotamia that have influenced politics in Iran, that is why we have called this the 'Mesopotamian School.'" Given Adamiyat's well-known anticlericalism, one would think that he is referring to the *ulama* in the shrine cities, whom many Iranians suspect of being British puppets, except that he goes on to write, "The center of this school is Baghdad, and it is there that the center of anti-Iranian intrigues were and are located."⁸³

By the 1970s Arab nationalism in Iraq and Persian nationalism in Iran were flourishing, with negative effects on people with ambiguous identities. An anecdote from the shah's regime at its most powerful illustrates this. When *Le Monde* published an article pointing out the Arab character of much of Khuzistan, the shah ordered his confidant, court minister Alam, to write a sharp response. Alam said that a sharp response would not be enough, and that a long-term plan for changing the language, dress, customs, and nationality of the people there had to be devised. He argued that if Shah Abbas and Nader Shah had moved Iranians around, why couldn't the shah's government do it? He added that when he had been the head of the committee to combat illiteracy, seeing that they did not have enough funding for the whole country, he concentrated all efforts in the Mishan plain,

Khorramshahr, Abadan, and Minu Island. He claimed that as a result 70 percent of people there now spoke Persian.⁸⁴

In Iraq, the Ba'athist takeover of 1969 gave a fillip to official Iranophobia. But one must remember that the deep causes for this lay elsewhere: on the one hand, the opposition to the Shi'i majority, and on the other hand the Cold War, in which Iraq and Iran found themselves on opposite sides. The heaviest price for these geo-political entanglements was paid by the few remaining Iranian residents of Iraq and by the "inauthentic" Iraqi citizens. Between 1969 and 1989 hundreds of thousands were expelled from the country and deported to the Iranian border, most of them incapable of speaking Persian.⁸⁵

The anti-Iranian animus peaked when the Ba'athist regime presented the September 1980 Iraqi attack on Iran as a reenactment of the battle of Qadisiya, in which Muslims had inflicted the first major defeat on the Sasanian Empire.⁸⁶ Saddam even built a huge monument depicting the eternal battle between Arabs and Persians,⁸⁷ conveniently forgetting that in 1975, in the wake of the Algiers accord that normalized relations between the two countries, he had sent a message to the shah urging him to distance himself from the United States, arguing that the Iran and Iraq had common religious, cultural, and family connections, and that its border populations were related to each other both in Kurdistan and in Khuzistan, creating solidarities that should be used to unite Iran and Iraq so that they could stand up to the West, which deemed both countries inferior.⁸⁸ In 1981 the Iraqi government issued a decree offering \$8,000 to any Iraqi who divorced his "Iranian" wife,⁸⁹ and the anti-Persian campaign became frankly racist with the publication of a pamphlet titled "Three Whom God Should Not have Created: Persians, Jews and Flies," whose author, a close relative of Saddam Hussein, averred that Persians were animals God created in the shape of humans, Jews a mixture of the dirt and leftovers of diverse peoples, and flies a trifling creation the purpose of whose creation was not apparent.⁹⁰

The Islamic Republic did not reciprocate this ethnic name-calling, as it has in theory been committed to Muslim brotherhood. But by 1979 notions of Iranian civilizational superiority had been internalized even by the pious Muslims who volunteered to fight against Saddam Hussein, including non-Persians: an Arab-Iranian prisoner of war told the British social worker quoted earlier that the Arabs of Iran were better Muslims and better Arabs than those of Iraq.⁹¹ Although the government did not resort to Arabophobia in its propaganda effort against Saddam Hussein's regime, the hundreds of thousands of Iraq refugees found it difficult to be accepted by the population. They are not called *panahandeh*, refugee, but *mo'aved*, returnee, a word that has acquired a pejorative connotation. The fact that the more fortunate of these immigrants had family ties to the ruling clerics, enabling them to get government jobs, did not endear them to the population either, especially to the secular middle class brought up on anti-Arab Iranian nationalism.⁹² As a result of these difficulties many chose to settle in Lebanon, Syria, or the emirates.

In recent years, the delegitimization of the Islamic republic has led to a revival of Persian nationalism in Iran, in which antipathy to the ruling clerics is again expressed with anti-Arab feeling. As for Iraq, a survey carried out in late 2004 found that 54 percent of respondents (70 percent among Arab Sunnis, 49 percent among Kurds and Shi'is) thought Iranians undesirable as neighbors. While this

is high, it is lower than that of Americans and Britons (85 percent) and Turks (59 percent), and only slightly higher than Kuwaitis (49 percent).⁹³

Given the overtly anti-Persian propaganda of the Ba'athist regime and the anti-Arab predispositions of many educated Iranians, it is astonishing how many dissident groups in both countries chose "enemy territory" as a basis of operation—even before the outbreak of the war in 1980. In the 1970s the Iraqi government had tolerated the presence of Ayatollah Khomeini, and helped the Tudeh party, Iran's pro-Moscow Communist party.⁹⁴ After the war began, the moderate National Movement of Resistance of Shapur Bakhtiar and the radical People's Mojahedin of Iran (Pmoi) were active in Iraq, with the former operating a radio station that in the early 1980s regularly featured broadcasts by Iran's most celebrated comic novelist, Iraj Pezeshkzad,⁹⁵ and the latter maintaining an army that was reportedly used by Saddam in his fight against insurgents.⁹⁶

On the Iraqi side, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) was based in Iran, and one of the two Kurdish parties, Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, maintained close contacts with the Islamic Republic as well; both groups are now major players in post-Saddam Iraq. But although some Iraqis and some Iranians found the "hereditary enemy" more congenial than their political adversaries at home, at the end of the day Iraqis, including Shi'i Arabs, fought loyally for Saddam Hussein, and Iranians, including many of Khuzistan's Arabs, fought loyally for Khomeini. By the 1980s the modern nation-state and its requirements had been internalized by both Iranians and Iraqis. What remains to be done is to demonstrate that these nationalist constructs are of recent vintage, not an avatar of an age-old conflict.

ARABS AND PERSIAN THROUGH THE AGES

Proponents of the "ancient hostility" thesis often begin with the wars that the founder of the Persian Empire, Cyrus, fought against his Mesopotamian neighbors, the Babylonians, to posit some kind of structural geopolitical conflict between the rulers of the Iranian plateau and those of the Mesopotamian lowlands. That Cyrus took Babylon is a fact, but before that he had vanquished the equally "Aryan" kingdom of the Medes, while the Babylonians had for centuries fought with the equally "Semitic" Assyrians. Far from constituting an antinomial relationship, that of the pre-Islamic Persians with their Semitic neighbors to the west was actually one of fruitful cultural interaction. The Iranian spring festival (Persian *nouruz*, Kurdish *nevrûz*), for most Iranians a symbol of Iranian nationhood, is a local manifestation of a spring ritual that used to be celebrated all over Western Asia, including Mesopotamia,⁹⁷ and the columns and reliefs of Persepolis, for many Iranian nationalists of today the quintessential emblem of Iranian national identity, clearly show the influence of earlier Mesopotamian (as well as Greek and Lydian) monumental arts.⁹⁸ And centuries before Muslim Persians adopted the Arabic alphabet, Middle Iranian languages such as Middle Persian, Parthian, and even Soghdian were written in the Aramaic script developed in Mesopotamia in the eighth century BC, a legacy of Cyrus's encounter with Babylonian scribes upon his conquest of that state.

As for Arabs proper, their relationship with the Achaemenids does not seem to have been particularly hostile—in fact, the king of the Arabs is reported by Herodotus to have facilitated the conquest of Egypt by Cyrus's son Cambyses.⁹⁹ In the

last centuries before Islam, the Sasanian Empire maintained a mutually beneficial relationship most of the time with the Arab vassal kingdom of the Lakhmids, and jointly defended lower Mesopotamia against desert Bedouins.¹⁰⁰ The relations were so close that a number of Sasanian princes were sent by their crowned fathers to the Lakhmid court—most famously Bahram V (r. 421–439), who spent his youth at the court of Munzir ibn Numan, who also helped him gain his throne in Ctesiphon after a court cabal had tried to put a different prince on it. These close relations belie the notion of an Arab-Persian hostility reaching back to pre-Islamic times—in fact, the Lakhmids spent their time fighting their fellow Arab Ghasanids, who were allies of the Byzantines.

The beginning of the Qur'an's Sura al-Rum, which seems to express a preference for the Byzantines in their long battle against the Sasanians, has been interpreted as betokening early Muslims' (and therefore Arabs') hostility to Persians.¹⁰¹ Even if true, this has to be weighed against the crucial role attributed by Muslim tradition to Salman the Persian in Mecca and by the Prophet's reported saying that "if scholarship hung suspended in the highest parts of heaven, the Persians would attain it."

For modern Iranian nationalists, the foundational event that justifies anti-Arab resentment is the conquest of the Sasanian Empire by Arabs in the mid-seventh century. But quite aside from the fact that the Sasanian Empire was not overrun by "Iraqis" but by Arabs from the Arabian peninsula who had previously overrun Iraq itself, a land that had until recently been ruled by the Christian Arab Lakhmids, it is doubtful that in their own mind the men who fought to spread the new religion did so qua Arabs; it is far more likely that they thought of themselves as Muslims first and foremost.¹⁰² The role Persians played in the development of Islamic culture is so well known that there is no need to expound in it here; none other than the great Arab scholar Ibn Khaldun admitted as much.¹⁰³

It is true that the Shu'ubiyya movement seemed to pit mostly Persians against mostly Arabs, but that movement fizzled out when Persian (and later Turkish) dynasties came to rule over the lands inhabited by the Persians. Moreover, it had no political import and was a literary movement that it would be anachronistic to interpret as some kind of protonationalism. After the Shu'ubiyya movement there is no evidence for a conflictual relationship between Arabs and Persians. Various dynasties ruled over states with ethnically mixed populations, and the inevitable struggles between them were motivated by competition for power. To the extent that such conflicts had an ideological component, it was religion rather than ethnicity that mattered. When a political entity named Iran reappeared in the wake of the Mongol conquests,¹⁰⁴ opposition against Arabs played no part in it. In the conclusion to his book on the evolution of the term *Iran*, Gherardo Gnoli writes, "The historical development of the idea of Iran is, in actual fact, complex and far from being straightforward. Suffice it to mention the part played by the Mongols and, in any case, by non-Iranian ethnic groups. *And a perspective based on a presumed opposition between Arabs and Iranians would be equally erroneous.*"¹⁰⁵

One area where Arab and Persian nationalisms clash is geographic nomenclature, more precisely the eternal debates over Iran's southwestern province and the body of water separating the Iranian plateau from the Arabian peninsula. The first is more directly relevant to Iranian-Iraqi relations and will therefore be discussed in greater detail.

The name Khuzistan is an old one, reaching back to early Islamic times, when Arab geographers applied it to the land of the Khuzes, a people that was probably descended from the ancient Elamites, who had preceded both Arabs and Persians and were related to neither.¹⁰⁶ This community also gave its name to the region's capital, Suq al-Akhwaz (market of the Khuzes), which in time became al-Ahwaz/Ahvaz. The Safavids invited Shi'i Arab tribes from the Nejd to settle in the area to act as buffers against the Sunni Ottomans,¹⁰⁷ and henceforth the western part of the area became known as Arabistan, a name that came to be applied to the rest of the old province of Khuzistan only in the second half of the eighteenth century. In the context of a multiethnic state whose ruling dynasties were often of Turkish origin, that name did not have more of a "national" connotation than the provinces of Kurdistan or Luristan, lands of the Kurds and Lurs, which are part of Iran's administrative map even today. Like some other parts of the Qajar state,¹⁰⁸ Arabistan had a hereditary local ruler, who was a vassal of the shah in Tehran. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, this ruler was supplanted by Shaykh Khaz'al, the head of the Shi'i Bani Ka'b tribe. This was a time when the central state in Iran weakened, allowing a number of local rulers to assert their autonomy. Shaykh Khaz'al was helped by the British, who counted on him to protect their oil interests in southwestern Iran.¹⁰⁹ Reza Khan renamed Arabistan Khuzistan in 1923 and put an end to Khaz'al's rule in 1924. In 1935, Khaz'al's capital, Muhammara, was given an invented name, Khorramshahr, which is in fact a Persian translation of Muhammara.¹¹⁰ While both toponymic changes were no doubt motivated by Reza Shah's nationalism, which identified Iran with Persian culture, it must be remembered that Khuzistan was neither an invented name nor a pre-Islamic one: under the Sasanians the area had been known as Susiana, after the ancient capital of the region, Susa (today's Shush).

Shaykh Khaz'al did indeed claim the mantle of Arab nationalism (his mother, incidentally, was Persian¹¹¹), and Reza Khan was motivated by Persian nationalism, but their struggle was not the reenactment of an "ancient" conflict; instead, it represented the introduction of new nationalist ideas into the age-old problematic of center-periphery relations, for in the Middle East, when the central authority of a state weakens, peripheral vassals/governors have always taken flight. In Iran Khaz'al was not the only one who did so: in Mashhad, Mohammad Taqi Khan Pesyan, a "Persian," also set up a regime of his own, and he, too, was defeated by Reza Khan.¹¹² Moreover, not far from Muhammara, the Shaykh of Kuwait, again helped by the British, also acquired increasing autonomy from his distant Ottoman suzerains, a development no one interprets as a nationalist Arab movement against Turks. The difference between Kuwait and Muhammara was that the British kept protecting the former but abandoned the latter and that the Iranian state was successful in reestablishing its control over the domains of the Shaykh of Muhammara, while Iraq, the successor state of the Ottoman Empire in the region, was unable to assert its claim to Kuwait.¹¹³ In the end, Shaykh Khaz'al's fourth son ('Abd al-Amir) became the last Shah's aide de camp.¹¹⁴

Although, as I have tried to show, an interpretation of a center-periphery question like that of the relationship between Muhammara/Arabistan/Khuzistan and Tehran in purely *national* terms is untenable, it is equally untenable to posit a timeless, essentially Iranian character for Khuzistan, a region that is geographically and demographically connected with Mesopotamia but that politically has been

connected to the adjacent Iranian plateau for millennia, under dynasties both Persian and non-Persian.¹¹⁵ Ethnic identities and national loyalties evolve over time, and while the former change slowly, the latter can shift relatively quickly. As a result of the Iran-Iraq War, a large portion of the non-Arab population of central and southwestern Khuzistan left, leaving cities like Ahvaz and Khorramshahr more ethnically homogeneous than before.¹¹⁶ One factor that assured the loyalty of most Arabs to Iran was the shared Twelver Shi'i faith in face of a Sunni-dominated Iraqi state. If a stable Iraqi state dominated by Arab Shi'is emerges, it is not hard to imagine that Khuzistan's Arabs might come to feel some affinity for it, a change that would transform them from an ethnic into a national minority and could not but embitter state-to-state relations.

As for the Persian Gulf, the name "Arabian Gulf" came into widespread use in the Arab world only in the 1960s, and represents a nationalist reaction against a name that fills modern-day Iranians with pride. But even here, the "Persian" in "Persian Gulf" has no national connotation and refers to the province of Fars, which lies on its northern shore. This is line with the naming practices of Muslim geographers, who called the Mediterranean the "Roman Sea" (Bahr al-Rum) because it led to Rome. "Persian Gulf" thus does not mean the gulf that belongs to Iran, but the gulf that leads to Fars province. Nor is it the only historically attested name for that body of water, which has also been called *Ichthiophagorum Sinus* (Gulf of the Fish-Eaters), Gulf of Basra, Gulf of Qatif, and indeed *Sinus Arabicus*, Arabian Gulf. For the locals, it was, and still is simply the *khali*j, Gulf; when it comes to expressing their identity, the inhabitants of the Persian Gulf's northern shore define themselves as *khali*j*i*, distinguishing between *khali*j*i*s of "this side" and those of the "other side."¹¹⁷

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have tried to show that anti-Arab Iranian nationalism and anti-Persian Iraqi nationalism are ideological constructs that are not the logical consequences of immemorial ethnic or, more absurd still, racial hostilities. They are products of cultural and political elites that had an interest in undoing the multifarious intersocietal linkages connecting the populations on both sides of the border.

Iranian and Iraqi nationalism both fit the model so elegantly enunciated more than a century ago by the Irish classicist Gilbert Murray:

In . . . almost every nation in the world from the Americans to the Chinese and the Finns, the same whisper from below the threshold sounds incessantly in men's ears, "We are the pick and flower of nations: the only nation that is really generous and brave and just . . . Other nations may have fine characteristics, but we only are normal and exactly right. Other nations boast and are aggressive, we are modest and claim only what is our barest due, though we cannot help seeing our own general superiority, and every unprejudiced observer admits that our territories ought to be enlarged. We are above all things reasonable . . . It is only those envious and lying foreigners who dare to dispute the fact."¹¹⁸

These nationalist constructs were transmitted to the population by the educational systems of the two states, and it is not astonishing that they have been

internalized. Political conflicts that had their origin in geopolitical rivalries, both global (the Cold War) and regional (the contest for hegemony in the Gulf), and in ideological oppositions (left-leaning republicanism versus monarchism between 1958 and 1979, secularism versus Islamism between 1979 and 2003) added to the plausibility of these constructs. The fall of the Ba'athist regime in 2003 could have put an end to the growing estrangement between Iranians and Iraqis, and on the level of state-to-state relations it did. But at the popular level the watershed of 2003 had the opposite effect, for two reasons. On the Arab side, Sunnis have not been able to come to terms with the fact that the Shi'i majority is now politically hegemonic in Iraq, and the anger is once again directed against Iran. On the Iranian side, the determination of the Iranian government that the U.S. effort in Iraq should fail has led it to intervene in Iraqi affairs, an intervention that has been facilitated by the transsocietal linkages discussed earlier. Many Iraqis blame Iran for the sectarianism that has gripped Iraqi society, pointing out that Iran has delivered arms to a number of Iraqi groups that fight each other. While some Iraqis have become Iranian clients, many others, including Shi'is, have come to dislike Iran with an intensity greater than that shown during the Iraq-Iran War.¹¹⁹

Given the prevalence of nationalist constructs on both sides, the instant experts that international crises usually generate should perhaps be excused for echoing these constructs in their analyses, especially since the Iraqis and Iranians they meet tend to be secular educated people who are more often than not ardent nationalists. But one may also wonder whether references to ancient history are not also a way to demonstrate one's credentials as an expert. In a world in which all manner of massacres are justified in racial and ethnic terms,¹²⁰ it is the ethical duty of every scholar with pretensions to basic decency to debunk such constructs rather than, as the *New York Times* article quoted earlier would have it, bank on them.

NOTES

1. "Iran" is an Indo-European word and etymologically related to "Aryan" (and perhaps "Ireland"), while the word "Iraq" is Semitic and of the same root as "arak." Needless to say, Aryan and Semitic refer to language families and are therefore linguistic terms, not racial ones.
2. Peter Christensen, *The Decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and Environments in the History of the Middle East, 500 B.C. to A.D. 1500*, trans. Steven Sampson (Odense: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 1993).
3. *Da'erat al-ma'arefe farsi*, vol. 1, under "Arak."
4. Christian Bromberger, "Identité alimentaire et altérité culturelle dans le nord de l'Iran: le froid, le chaud, le sexe et le reste," in *Identité alimentaire et altérité culturelle* (Neuchâtel: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1985), 6.
5. On the origins of this alliance see Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *The Foreign Policy of Iran, 1500–1941: A Developing Nation in World Affairs* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1966), 259–266.
6. See, for instance, J.M. Abdulghani, *Iraq & Iran: The Years of Crisis* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), 2–3; Stephen R. Grummon, *The Iran-Iraq War: Islam Embattled* (New York: Praeger, 1982), 2–3; Tareq Ismael, *Iraq and Iran: Roots of Conflict* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press), 1; Majid Khadduri, *The Gulf War: The Origins and Implications of the Iraq-Iran Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press), 3. Scholars that do not impute the war to ancient hostilities and emphasize contemporary

- political factors include Daniel Pipes, "A Border Adrift: Origins of the Conflict," in *The Iran-Iraq War: New Weapons, Old Conflicts*, ed. Shirin Tahir-Kheli and Shaheen Ayubi (New York: Praeger, 1983), 4–8 (judging by the book's title, Pipes's refutation does not seem to have convinced the editors.); Shahrām Chubin and Charles Tripp, *Iran and Iraq at War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988); Mostafa Arki, *Iran-Irak: Acht Jahre Krieg im Nahen Osten* ([East] Berlin: VWB-Verlag für Wissenschaft und Bildung, 1989); Stephen C. Pelletiere, *The Iran-Iraq War: Chaos in a Vacuum* (New York: Praeger, 1992); and Harald Möller, *Der Krieg Irak-Iran, 1980–88* (Berlin: published by the author, 1995).
7. Paul Balta, *Iran-Irak: Une guerre de 5000 ans* (Paris: Anthropos, 1987), 6. A shorter English version of this thesis can be found in Paul Balta, "Relations between Iraq and Iran," in *Iraq: Power and Society*, ed. Derek Hopwood, Habib Ishow, and Thomas Koszinowski (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1993), 381–83.
 8. *New York Times*, March 18, 2006.
 9. French Cardinal Mazarin, né Giulio Mazarini, who left the papal diplomatic service for France in 1636, and Prince Metternich, a Rhinelander who rose to be Austrian chancellor in the nineteenth century, exemplify this.
 10. Ludwig Paul, "Zaza(ki)—Dialekt, Sprache, Nation?" in *Religion und Wahrheit: Religionswissenschaftliche Studien: Festschrift für Gernot Wiessner zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Bärbel Köhler (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998).
 11. This invention of a nonstate "nation" by means of creating a "national" language on the basis of several related dialects is by no means unique, as the Basque and Occitanian national projects show.
 12. John S. Guest, *Survival among the Kurds: A History of the Yezidis* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993).
 13. William Eagleton, Jr., *The Kurdish Republic of 1946* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), and Rouhollah K. Ramazani, "The Autonomous Republics of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan: Their Rise and Fall," in *The Anatomy of Communist Takeovers*, ed. Thomas T. Hammond (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1975).
 14. For a somewhat hagiographic account of Barzani's life and career see Massoud Barzani, *Mustafa Barzani and the Kurdish Liberation Movement (1931–1961)* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
 15. Ali Naqi Alikhani, ed., *Yaddashtha-ye Alam* (n.p.: New World Ltd., 1993), 2:65.
 16. See Joost R. Hiltermann, "Outsiders as Enablers: Consequences and Lessons from International Silence on Iraq's Use of Chemical Weapons during the Iran-Iraq War," in *Iran, Iraq and the Legacies of War*, ed. Lawrence C. Potter and Gary G. Sick (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 151–66.
 17. Strictly speaking this is inaccurate, as Twelver Shi'i Kurds have served at all levels of the state administration. The point is that until recently identification with the Kurdish community has been stronger among Sunni Kurds. Even that is beginning to change, however, as evinced by the new popularity of Kurdish language courses in Kermanshah, the center of Iran's Shi'i Kurds.
 18. James N. Rosenau, "Introduction: Political Science in a Shrinking World," in *Linkage Politics: Essays on the Convergence of National and International Systems*, ed. James N. Rosenau (New York: The Free Press, 1969).
 19. Dominique Carnoy, "Les chrétientés de la République islamique," *Les Cahiers de l'Orient*, no. 48 (1997): 86.
 20. Eden Naby, "The Assyrian Diaspora: Cultural Survival in the Absence of State Structure," in *Central Asia and the Caucasus: Transnationalism and Diaspora*, ed. Touraj Atabaki and Sanjyot Mehendale (London: Routledge, 2005), 214–30.
 21. Eden Naby, personal communication.
 22. Not all of Iran's Arab population has strong links with Iraq, and there is also an ethnic interface centered on the Persian Gulf. For studies of Iran's "Gulf" Arabs, many of

- whom are Sunni, see Schahnaz Nadjmabadi, "Identité ethnique contre nationalité: le cas de l'île de Larak," in *Le Fait ethnique en Iran et en Afghanistan*, ed. Jean-Pierre Digard (Paris: Editions du CNRS, 1988), 65–74; Schahnaz Nadjmabadi, "Arabzadeh (Born Arab): The Arab-speaking Population among the Iranian Shoreliners on the Persian Gulf," in *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: A Critical Review* (Amsterdam: AOE Workshop, 1993); and Schahnaz Razieh Najmabadi, "The Arab Presence on the Iranian Coast of the Persian Gulf," in *The Persian Gulf in History*, ed. Lawrence G. Potter (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 129–45.
23. E. S. Drower, *The Mandaeans of Irak and Iran* (1937, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2002); Kurt Rudolph, *Mandaeism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1978).
 24. Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Mandaeans: Ancient Texts and Modern People* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). For the situation of Mandaeans in Iran see Raoul Motika, "Die aktuelle Lage der iranischen Mandäer und die Verfassung der Islamischen Republik," in *Münchener Materialien und Mitteilungen zur Irankunde*, ed. Eberhard Krüger (Munich: Two-Step Communications, 1999), 4:125–41. In 1996 Ayatollah Khamenei declared them to be a "people of the book."
 25. *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under "Alliance," by Amnon Netzer. See also Avraham Cohen, "Iranian Jewry and the Educational Endeavors of the Alliance Israélite Universelle," *Jewish Social Studies* 48 (1986): 15–44.
 26. Arlene Dallafar, "Iraqi Jews in Iran," in *Esther's Children: A Portrait of Iranian Jews*, ed. Homa Sarshar and Houman Sarshar (Beverly Hills, CA: The Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History, 2002), 277.
 27. On the background of this anti-Jewish outburst see Reeva Spector Simon, "Iraq," in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*, ed. Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 350.
 28. Haideh Sahim, "Iran and Afghanistan," in *The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa in Modern Times*, ed. Reeva Spector Simon, Michael Menachem Laskier, and Sara Reguer (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 374.
 29. For details see Dallafar, "Iraqi Jews in Iran," 279–81.
 30. For Iran see Rula Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004); for Iraq see Yitzhak Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25–48.
 31. On the former episode see Nikki R. Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891–1892* (London: Frank Cass, 1966); on the latter Abdul-Hadi Hairi, *Shi'ism and Constitutionalism in Iran* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 87–108, 111–20.
 32. On the Iranian community in Iraq see Pierre-Jean Luizard, "Iraniens d'Irak. Une élite religieuse chiite face à un Etat sunnite," *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien* 22 (1996): 163–90.
 33. Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 14–23; and Bruce Masters, "The Treaties of Erzurum (1823 and 1848) and the Changing Status of Iranians in the Ottoman Empire," *Iranian Studies* 24, no. 1–4 (1991): 3–15.
 34. Luizard, "Iraniens d'Irak," 176.
 35. D. C. Watt, "The Sa'dabad Pact of July 8, 1937," *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 49 (July–October 1962): 296–306, and Antoine Fleury, "La constitution d'un 'bloc oriental': Le pacte de Saadabad comme contribution à la sécurité collective dans les années trente," *Revue d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* 27, no. 106 (1977): 1–18.
 36. Luizard, "Iraniens d'Irak," 176. On Jawahiri see Ahmad Mahdavi Damghani, "Javaheri, sha'er-e irani tabar-e 'arab," *Golestan* 1, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 143–46.
 37. Sadeq Salmasi, *Mohammad Ja'far Salmasi: nakhostin qahraman-e irani-ye olampik* (Los Angeles, CA: ZAX, 1999), 41–42, 50–53, 79–81.

38. Cyrus Schayegh, "Serial Murder in Tehran: Crime, Science, and the Formation of Modern State and Society in Interwar Iran," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 47 (2005), 836, 850.
39. In January 1970 his son Sadr al-Din Sadr visited court minister Alam and gave examples of the torture used by the Iraqi regime, which saddened the Shah and induced him to order that he be helped Ali Naqi Alikhani, ed., *Yaddashtha-ye Alam* (n.p.: New World Ltd., 1992), 1:359.
40. For Musa Sadr's role in Lebanon see Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986); and for his role in Iran see H. E. Chehabi and Majid Tafreshi, "Musa Sadr and Iran," in *Distant Relations: Iran and Lebanon in the Last 500 Years* (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2006), 137–61.
41. Werner Zürer, *Persien zwischen England und Rußland 1918–1925* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1978), 349–52, and Pierre-Jean Luizard, "Introduction," in Cheikh Muhammad al-Khâlisî, *La vie de l'ayatollah Mahdî al-Khâlisî (Batal al-islâm)* (Paris: Éditions de La Martinière, 2005), 7–18.
42. See Homa Katouzian, "The Campaign against the Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1919," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 25 (1998): 5–46.
43. Luizard, "Iranians d'Irak," 173–74, and al-Khâlisî, *La vie de l'ayatollah Mahdî al-Khâlisî*, 61 and 82.
44. For Khaledizadeh's Iranian career (1922–49) see Said Amir Arjomand, "Ideological Revolution in Shi'ism," in *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988), 187–89; and for the Iraqi portion of his career (1949–63), see Werner Ende, "Success and Failure of a Shiite Modernist: Muhammad ibn Muhammad Mahdi al-Khalisi (1890–1963)," in *The Other Shiites: From the Mediterranean to Central Asia*, ed. Alessandro Monsutti, Silvia Naef, and Farian Sabahi (Berne: Peter Lang, 2007), 231–44.
45. al-Khâlisî, *La vie de l'ayatollah Mahdî al-Khâlisî*, 60.
46. *Rowhani-ye mobarez, Ayatollah Kashani beh revayat-e asnad* (Tehran: Markaz-e barrasi-ye asnad-e tarikhi-ye vezarat-e ettela'at, 2000), 1:18, 19, 50, 51, 54, 96.
47. On him see Yann Richard, "Ayatollah Kashani: Precursor of the Islamic Republic?" in *Religion and Politics in Iran*, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 101–24.
48. On the latter see Alain Auffray, "Ich liebe dich, moi non plus . . .," *Libération*, July 1, 2005, 34–35.
49. Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 83–87.
50. On Arab Shi'is and their relations with Iran see Graham E. Fuller and Rend Rahim Francke, *The Arab Shi'a: The Forgotten Muslims* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999).
51. Shaykh Muhammad Mehdi Shams al-Din, *The Rising of al-Husayn: Its Impact on the Consciousness of Muslim Society* (London: Muhammadi Trust, 1985), 63, 192, 194–95.
52. For their beliefs see Henry Corbin, "L'école shaykhie en théologie shi'ite," *Annuaire d'E.P.H.E.* (1961–61); for their genesis see Peter Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions: From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 8–10. Some information on the community can be gleaned from their Arabic and Persian website <http://www.alabarar.com>, accessed on November 15, 2011.
53. Personal interview with Isa Zia Ebrahimi, a Shaykhi lawyer, in Kerman, July 15, 2003.
54. On the Babi movement see Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).
55. Smith, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions*, 61.
56. For details see Juan R. I. Cole, *Modernity & the Millennium: The Genesis of the Baha'i Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 28–29.

57. Asya Asbaghi, *Die semantische Entwicklung arabischer Wörter im Persischen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1987).
58. For a list see Asya Asbaghi, *Persische Lehnwörter im Arabischen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988). See also J. J. Barcia Goyanes, "Términos persas en escritos anatómicos árabes," *Asclepio* 47, no. 1 (1995): 23–31.
59. Wallace M. Erwin, *A Short Reference Grammar of Iraqi Arabic* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1963), 5, 10.
60. Sami Zubaida, "National, Communal, and Global Dimensions in Middle Eastern Food Cultures," in *Culinary Cultures of the Middle East*, ed., Sami Zubaida and Richard Tapper (London: I. B. Tauris, 1994), 37–38, and Sami Zubaida, "Rice in the Culinary Cultures of the Middle East," in *ibid.*, 97.
61. I thank Kanan Makiya for this information.
62. Daisy Iny, *The Best of Baghdad Cooking, with Treats from Teheran* (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1976), ix.
63. Helen Philon, "Iraq," in *Architecture of the Islamic World: Its History and Social Meaning*, ed. George Michell (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 245.
64. *Ibid.*
65. O. Wright, *The Modal System of Arab and Persian Music A.D. 1250–1300* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 5.
66. For a comparative study of a *maqam* and a *dastgah* that are closely related see Thomas Ogger, *Maqam Segah/Sikah: Vergleich der Kunstmusik des Irak und des Iran anhand eines maqām-Modells* (Hamburg: Verlag der Musikalienhandlung Karl Dieter Wagner, 1987), especially 143–71.
67. Neil van der Linden, "The Classical Iraqi Maqam and Its Survival," in *Colors of Enchantment: Theater, Dance, Music, and the Visual Arts of the Middle East*, ed. Sherifa Zuhur (Cairo: The American University of Cairo Press, 2001), 323, 322, 324.
68. Ian Brown, *Khomeini's Forgotten Sons: The Story of Iran's Boy Soldiers* (London: Grey Seal, 1990), 137.
69. See Jamil al-Ta'i, *al-Zurkhanat al-Baghdadiya* (Baghdad: al-Nahda al-'Arabiya Bookstore, 1986).
70. Marius Canard, "La lutte chez les Arabes," in *Cinquantenaire de la faculté des lettres d'Alger* (Algiers: Société historique algérienne, 1932), especially 132–35. The Arab Wrestling Federation, for instance, is based in Baghdad.
71. Peter J. Chelkowski, ed., *Ta'zieh: Ritual and Drama in Iran* (New York: New York University Press, 1979).
72. Ibrahim al-Haidari, *Zur Soziologie des schiitischen Chiliasmus: Ein Beitrag zur Erforschung des irakischen Passionsspiels* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1975); and Peter Heine, "Aspects of the Social Structure of Shiite Society in Modern Iraq," in *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture and Political History*, ed. Rainer Brunner and Werner Ende (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2001), 87–93.
73. For details see Sabrina Mervin, *Un réformisme chiite: Ulémas et lettrés du Jabal 'Âmil (actuel Liban-Sud) de la fin de l'Empire ottoman à l'indépendance du Liban* (Paris: Karthala, 2000), chapter 6. For a discussion in English see Werner Ende, "The Flagellations of Muharram and the Shi'ite 'Ulamā," *Der Islam* 55, no. 1 (March 1978): 19–36.
74. Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, *Frontier Fictions: Shaping the Iranian Nation: 1804–1946* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
75. On this see Mangol Bayat Philipp, "Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani: A Nineteenth-Century Persian Nationalist," *Middle Eastern Studies* 10, no. 1 (January 1974), 44, 46. One might add that Kermani was also fiercely anti-Jewish, giving Iranian antisemitism the dubious distinction of being simultaneously anti-Arab and anti-Jewish. See Sorour Soroudi, "Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani and the Jewish Question," in *Muslim-Jewish Encounters*:

- Intellectual Traditions and Modern Politics*, ed. Ronald L. Nettle and Suha Taji-Farouki (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1998), 149–70.
76. Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, "Contested Memories: Narrative Structures and Allegorical Meanings of Iran's Pre-Islamic History," *Iranian Studies* 29, no. 1–2 (Winter/Spring 1996): 149–75.
 77. See, for instance, Homa Katouzian, *Sadeq Hedayat: The Life and Legend of an Iranian Writer* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991), 6–7, 80, 81, 71–77. For a general discussion see Joya Blondel Saad, *The Image of Arabs in Modern Persian Literature* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1996).
 78. Just as the word "Turk" connoted an unrefined Anatolian peasant to the Ottomans before it came to have a positive national content with the Young Turks.
 79. The contribution of premodern Persians to Arabic is well known, but what is often forgotten is that early Iranian modernists were also familiar with Arabic literature. See Kamran Rastegar, "Literary Modernity between Arabic and Persian: Jurji Zaydan's *Riwayat* in Persian Translation," *Comparative Critical Studies* 4, no. 3 (2007): 359–78.
 80. Roy P. Mottahedeh, "The Shu'ubiyah Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran," *International Journal of Middle East History* 7 (1976): 161–82.
 81. Samir al-Khalil [Kanan Makiya], *Republic of Fear: The Inside Story of Saddam's Iraq* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990), 153–55; and Eric Davis, *Memories of State: Politics, History, and Collective Identity in Modern Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 184–88.
 82. Carl Brown called this the "puppeteer theory of international relations." L. Carl Brown, *International Politics and the Middle East* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 233–52.
 83. Fereydun Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Iran: Varaqi az Tarikh-e Siyasi-ye Iran*, 2nd printing (Tehran: Bongah-e Azar, 1944), 244.
 84. Ali Naqi Alikhani, ed., *Yaddashtha-ye Alam* (n.p.: New World Ltd., 1993), 2:393. The date of the entry is March 29, 1972.
 85. al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear*, 19, 135–36; and Luizard, "Iraniens d'Irak," 180–83. See also Faleh A. Jabar, *The Shi'ite Movement of Iraq* (London: Saqi, 2003), 201–8.
 86. Davis, *Memories of State*, 193–97.
 87. Samir al-Khalil [Kanan Makiya], *The Monument: Art, Vulgarity, and Responsibility in Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).
 88. Jamshid Amuzegar, "Khatereh'i az didar-e Shahanshah ba Saddam Huseyn," *Rahavard* 42 (Summer–Fall 1996): 246.
 89. Luizard, "Iraniens d'Irak," 182.
 90. al-Khalil, *Republic of Fear*, 17n21.
 91. Brown, *Khomeini's Forgotten Sons*, 19–21, 27.
 92. Fariba Adelhah, "Transformation sociale et recomposition identitaire dans le Golfe: parfois malgré eux, toujours entre deux," *Cahiers d'études sur la Méditerranée orientale et le monde turco-iranien* 22 (1996): 92–100.
 93. Mansoor Moaddel, Ronald Inglehart, and Mark Tessler, "The Worldviews of the Iraqi Public toward Religion, Politics, Gender, and Coalition Forces: Findings of Values Survey, November–December, 2004," table 4. I am grateful to Mansoor Moaddel for having made the results available to me.
 94. For details see Mateo Mohammad Farzaneh, "Interregional Rivalry Cloaked in Iraqi Arab Nationalism and Iran Secular Nationalism, and Shiite Ideology," *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 2, no. 3 (2008): 397–98.
 95. Pezeshkzad's popularity did not suffer as a result—unlike that of P. G. Wodehouse, whose humorous broadcasts from Berlin, after he had been taken prisoner by the Germans, induced him to live in the United State after the war.
 96. Luizard, "Iraniens d'Irak," 183.

97. Mehrdad Bahar, *Az ostureh ta tarikh*, ed. Abolqasem Esma'ilpur (Tehran: Nashr-e Cheshmeh, AH 1377/1998), 342.
98. John Boardman, *Persia and the West: An Archaeological Investigation of the Genesis of Achaemenid Art* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2000), 112–13, 119, 124, 134.
99. Jan Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London: Routledge, 2003), 235–37.
100. Gustav Rothstein, *Die Dynastie der Lahmiden in al-Hira. Ein Versuch zur arabisch-persischen Geschichte zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (Berlin: Verlag von Reuther & Reichard, 1899), 125–38. For economic relations see Michael Morony, "The Late Sasanian Economic Impact on the Arabian Peninsula," *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān: The International Journal of Ancient Iranian Studies* 1, no. 2 (Winter 2001–2002): 25–37.
101. "The Romans have been conquered in the neighboring land. But having been conquered they will conquer in a few years. God's is the imperative first and last. On that day the believers will rejoice." Qur'an 30:2–4.
102. Fred M. Donner, "The Islamic Conquests," in *A Companion to the History of the Middle East*, ed. Youssef M. Choueiri (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 28–51.
103. Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967), 372–75, 428–31.
104. Bert G. Fragner, "Historische Wurzeln neuzeitlicher iranischer Identität: zur Geschichte des politischen Begriff, 'Iran' im späten Mittelalter und in der Neuzeit," in *Hokhmot banta betah: Studia semitica necnon iranica. Rudolpho Macuch septuagenario ab amicis et discipulis dedicata*, ed. Maria Macuch, Christa Müller-Kessler, and Bert G. Fragner (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1989), 79–100.
105. Gherardo Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay of its Origin* (Rome: Instituto Italiano per il Medino ed Estremo Oriente, 1989), 182. Emphasis added.
106. W. Barthold, *An Historical Geography of Iran*, trans. Svat Soucek (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 183–85.
107. Louis Massignon, "Mohammerah," *Revue du Monde Musulman* 2, no. 11 (November 1908): 390.
108. For the Ardalan dynasty in Kurdistan see B. Nikitine, "Les valis d'Ardelan," *Revue du Monde Musulman* 49 (1922); for the Khozaymeh dynasty of Qa'enat (eastern Iran) see Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *The Amir of the Borderlands and Eastern Iranian Borders* (London: Urosecvic Foundation, 1995).
109. William Strunk, "Britain, Persia and Shaykh Khaz'al: The Genesis of a 'Special Relationship,'" in *Islamic and Middle Eastern Societies: A Festschrift for Professor Wadie Jwaideh*, ed. Robert Olson (Brattleboro, VT: Amana Books, 1987), 152–71.
110. After its recapture from Iraqi troops in 1982, the city was briefly renamed Khuninshahr, "bloody city."
111. Massignon, "Mohammerah," 394.
112. Stephanie Cronin, "An Experiment in Revolutionary Nationalism: The Rebellion of Colonel Muhammad Taqi Khan Pasyan in Mashhad, April–October 1921," *Middle Eastern Studies* 33, no. 4 (October 1997): 693–750.
113. Although of course it tried in 1990, causing, one might add, far more Arab deaths than Reza Khan's largely bloodless recapturing of Muhammara.
114. Ali Naqi Alikhani, ed., *Yaddashtha-ye Alam 1355–1356* (Bethesda, MD: Ibex, 2008), 6:120. One brother was in Kuwait, another in Abu Dhabi.
115. Svat Soucek, "Arabistan or Khuzistan," *Iranian Studies* 27, no. 2–3 (Spring–Summer 1984): 195–213.
116. Adelkhah, "Transformation sociale et recomposition identitaire dans le Golfe," 100–102.
117. Fariba Adelkhah, email communication, February 24, 2010.

118. Gilbert Murray, "National Ideals: Conscious and Unconscious," *International Journal of Ethics* 11 (October 1900): 21. I thank Charles Kurzman for making me aware of this article.
119. A former Austrian ambassador to Iraq, Gudrun Harrer, told me that one could observe Shi'i youth in the city of Basra sing a song titled "Qadisiya," which the Saddam Hussein had tried to use to whip up anti-Iranian sentiment. Cambridge, MA, May 4, 2008.
120. Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006).

PART IV

**SELF-FASHIONING AND
INTERNAL OTHERING**

CHAPTER 10

IDENTITY AMONG THE JEWS OF IRAN

DANIEL TSADIK

IDENTITY IS DEFINED AS

- 1a:** sameness of essential or generic character in different instances **b:** sameness in all that constitutes the objective reality of a thing: Oneness
- 2a:** the distinguishing character or personality of an individual: Individuality
b: the relation established by psychological identification
- 3:** the condition of being the same with something described or asserted <establish the identity of stolen goods>
- 4:** an equation that is satisfied for all values of the symbols
- 5:** Identity Element.*

In the following essay, *identity* will be used in the sense of definition 2a (“the distinguishing character or personality of an individual”) while dealing with an individual (namely, a Jew) or group of individuals (namely, the Jews).

Jews have lived in Iran from time immemorial, starting sometime between the eighth and sixth centuries before the Common Era. In the Jews’ own eyes and in the eyes of the majority around them, the Jews’ “distinguishing character” had been their Jewishness—the feeling that they are part of one group, sharing common beliefs, customs, and one religion—just as it is usually today. This brief and tentative preliminary study may have ended on this note; however, there are several issues that complicate matters. Seeking to define identity among the Jews of Iran, one may encounter various vexing questions: First, singularity or plurality of identities: did the Jews have only one identity, or did they have more than one (e.g., religious identity, cultural identity, ethnic identity, national identity)? Second, central and

* Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, at: “identity.” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity>.

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marginal identities: if they had more than one identity, was one identity more prominent than the others? Third, stagnant or changing identity/ies over time: Is it possible to speak about specific identity/ies of the Jews over time, or was/were their identity/ies changing or shaping over time? Fourth, Jews as one or more groups: is it possible to generalize about the Jews of Iran and view them as one group of people that espoused certain identity/ies, or should the Jewish community be examined as a composite of different groups with various identities? Fifth, Iran versus other lands: what is the identity of the Jews of Iranian origin who immigrated to Israel, the United States, and elsewhere in recent decades? Sixth, definers of identity: Is the identity of the Jews of Iran established solely by that group's self-perception, or is it also established by society? These questions can surely be applied to various groups and should be kept in mind also when addressing the Jews of Iran. The following essay generally follows a chronological line, focusing on certain time periods starting from recent centuries.

ESPOUSING ANOTHER IDENTITY

Throughout most of their history, Jews did not explicitly address the question of their identity. It seems that their identity was clear enough to them and their surroundings: they were Jews (i.e., members of the same group and practitioners of the same religion and life rituals). If one attempts to substantiate the existence of Jewish identity with positive evidence from the past several centuries, one is usually limited to focusing on preserved texts. These texts were written by specific individuals, placing into question their validity as sources reflecting the common Jewish perspective on identity. Nevertheless, these texts were preserved, learned, and espoused by Jews in general and consequently can be viewed as reflecting Jewish identity.

Even if Judaism seems to have been the basis of the Jews' identity, one can nevertheless gain some data of a more nuanced Jewish self-perception in examining these texts. While occasionally composing in Hebrew, the Jews of Iran wrote many significant writings in Judeo-Persian—that is, Persian transliterated into Hebrew characters. They wrote in Judeo-Persian because, although their readers knew the Persian language, they were not necessarily familiar with the Perso-Arabic alphabet,¹ but with the Hebrew one. Significantly, one can argue that the Jews' writing in Judeo-Persian—and not in Hebrew—limited their readership to the Jewish Persian world. This fact may seem to indicate the Jews' orientation specifically toward the Persian world. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that the Jews wrote using the Hebrew alphabet, thereby barring entrance to those who could not read Hebrew—that is, non-Jewish readers of Persian. The Jews' orientation toward the world of Iran and the Persian language, however important, was thus still restricted.

The greatest Jewish writers in Iran were well aware of the best literary productions of the surrounding non-Jewish world. This can be demonstrated through three of the most significant Jewish composers: Shahin, 'Emrani, and Rabbi Yehudah b. El'azar. Probably the most important Jewish composer in Iran was Shahin (fourteenth century), who possibly wrote his compositions in Judeo-Persian. He has written a poetic depiction of certain Biblical books (parts of the Pentateuch, Book of Esther, Books of Ezra and Nehemiah). In his writings, Shahin was influenced by various non-Jewish compositions, such as the Muslim genre of *qisas al-anbiya'* (Stories of the Prophets), Sufi traditions, and al-Tabari's (d. 923) *Tarikh al-Rusul*

wa-al-Muluk (History of the Prophets and Kings).² Shahin inserted in his story “many details that originate from Muslim legendary sources.”³ This can be exemplified by his story of Abraham and Ishmael constructing the Ka’bah.⁴

Furthermore, Shahin was influenced by his Iranian surroundings. In addition to the aforementioned sources, he was influenced by Ferdowsi’s (d. 1020) *Shahnameh*. Furthermore, Shahin’s “poetic diction, his use of the Persian language and grammar, and the rhetorical forms he employs are typically those of classical Persian poetry.”⁵ His “epics reflect his thorough knowledge of classical Persian forms and conceits.”⁶ Shahin occasionally affords an Iranian color to his depiction of the Hebrew Bible’s stories.⁷ An excellent example of the fusion between Jewish and Iranian themes transpires in his work on the Book of Esther, *Ardashirnameh*, where Shahin presents Cyrus the Great as the son of Queen Esther and King Ardashir.⁸

‘Emrani (d. 1536), often considered by scholars as the second greatest Judeo-Persian poet, has written in different genres such as the epic, narrative and *midrashic* compositions, and didactic works. His *Fathnameh* (Book of Conquest) is influenced by the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi and is replete with Sufi terms. ‘Emrani’s other writings, such as *Entekhab-e Nakhlestan* (Choice of the Palm Grove), also comprise Sufi themes and tropes. In his *Saqinameh* (Book of the Cup-Bearer), ‘Emrani is influenced by compositions of Khayyam (d. 1131), Sa’di (d. 1283/1291?), Nezami (d. 1209), ‘Attar (d. ca. 1220), Rumi (d. 1273), and Hafez (d. 1390).⁹ The language as well as the themes and concepts of ‘Emrani’s *Ganjnameh* (Book of Treasure) “heavily” draw “on words, terms, similes, and metaphors derived directly from classical Persian lyrics and, especially, from Persian mystical poetry.”¹⁰

Rabbi Yehudah b. El’azar’s *Hovot Yehudah* (Duties of Judah) was written in 1686. The text is a major Judeo-Persian composition on Jewish thought and the principles of the Jewish religion. Rabbi Yehudah b. El’azar demonstrates in this book his mastery of numerous Jewish sources. He seems equally to have been at home with literary productions of non-Jewish origins, including those of Plato (d. 347/8 BCE), Aristotle (d. 322 BCE), Ibn Sina (d. 1037), al-Ghazali (d. 1111), Ibn Rushd (d. 1198), and Naser al-Din Tusi (d. 1274).¹¹

This consideration of Shahin, ‘Emrani, and Rabbi Yehudah b. El’azar shows the importance of major non-Jewish traditions in their writings. They read and explained Jewish sources, while occasionally utilizing non-Jewish—specifically Irano-Islamic—lenses. To some extent, the aforementioned composers, primarily Shahin, should be seen as writers whose horizon was Iran with its Irano-Islamic culture, while their point of focus was Judaism. Would it be possible to contend that these cases reflect Jews who regarded Iran, with its Muslim culture, as a component of their own identity, in addition to their Jewishness? The answer is complex. To be sure, their Jewishness was their religious “distinguishing character.” They had no qualms in attacking common Muslim beliefs. Implicitly rejecting the Muslim polemical view of ‘Ezra (‘Uzayr), for instance, Shahin says that after the Torah was burnt by Nebuchadnezzar, ‘Ezra wrote it “as it was at first; not a jot or little of it was changed.”¹² In a similar vein, ‘Emrani depicts Moses as “superior” to Muhammad,¹³ and Rabbi Yehudah b. El’azar devotes several passages to disputing with Christianity and Islam.¹⁴ By thus attacking Islam, Shahin, ‘Emrani, and Rabbi Yehudah b. El’azar highlighted the most important dividing line in society—that of religion—separating them from larger society and clarifying that they were first and foremost Jews; religiously they identified as Jews. At the same time, culturally they

were prone to borrow from the Iranian or Iranian-Muslim civilization, and as such, culturally speaking, at least to some extent, they identified with Iran.

Still, as much as Iranian or Iranian-Muslim elements are found in these writers' works, these elements seem to be marginal compared with these compositions' focus on Jewish beliefs and texts. These writers were first and foremost Jews who wrote about Jewish subjects for other Jews. Furthermore, during that time period to the late nineteenth century larger society was used to classify one's identity based on one's religion; Jews would then mostly be identified as followers of a different religion. In other words, Iran was certainly at least part of the Jews' cultural identity, but was secondary to their Jewish religious identity, due to society's perception of one's identity as resting on religious idiosyncrasy.¹⁵ This is also indicated by Jews' conversions to Islam, both voluntarily and by force.

**CONVERSIONS: "OUTWARDLY WE ARE ALL
MUSLIMS; IN OUR HEARTS WE'RE JEWS"¹⁶**

Identity is a function not only of a given group's self-perception but also of other groups' view of a given collective. In other words, the Jews' identity was shaped not only by the Jews' own self image and self-identification as Jews but also by society's approach to them. And this approach has a long-standing history. Throughout most of the Jews' life in Iran from early Islamic days (c. 650 CE) to the early twentieth century, society in general often viewed the world through religious lenses, differentiating between Muslims and the rest of the population, including Jews.

Within this ongoing process of differentiation, the fact that the Jews were seen primarily through religious spectacles is indicated by various elements, such as their Muslim neighbors' occasional attempts to convert some Jews to Islam. Such attempts at bringing the minority Jew into the fold of the Muslim majority suggests that the social divide between different groups lay along a religious line. Only a few years before Rabbi Yehudah b. Ela'azar's 1686 composition of *Duties of Judah*, some of the Jewish communities in Iran faced major waves of forced conversions. These incidents of conversions were recorded by, among other sources, the chronicle of the Jewish Babai b. Lutf, in whose Judeo-Persian *Ketab-e Anusi* (The Book of a Forced Convert) we find accounts of various such community-wide forced conversions from 1617 to 1662.¹⁷ A glimpse at Babai b. Lutf's view of his and his coreligionists' identity is provided when the author sees the forced conversions of his time as part of general Jewish history: "See how the Jewish people have suffered more and more in every generation . . . In every generation, a new exile, following fast upon the other, comes to the Jews from various kings."¹⁸ That is, the misfortunate story of Iran's Jews is part of a larger Jewish story and history. The Jews of Iran are seen here as part of the Jewish world.

Ketab-e Sargozasht-e Kashan dar bab-e 'Ebri va Guyimi-ye Thani (The Book of Events in Kashan Concerning the Jews: Their Second Conversion) of Babai b. Farhad covers aspects of Jewish life during the Afghan rule over parts of Iran from 1722 to 1730. While Babai b. Farhad writes that he "rub[s] the dust of *Khwajeh Hafez*[']s grave] upon" his eyes,¹⁹ reflecting his attachment to and admiration of this Iranian poet as well as Babai b. Farhad's cultural Iranian identity, the centrality of Babai b. Farhad's Jewish religious identity permeates throughout the text. He starts with a description of the Creator who revealed the Torah to Moses and later asks

God to “send the Messiah . . . Reestablish the Temple and Sanctuary . . . O Lord, make us glorious again so that we may engage ourselves in Your Torah every minute.”²⁰ He goes on to describe the times of Moses, prince of the prophets (*sarvar-e anbiya*), Abraham, and the intended sacrifice of Isaac.²¹ Furthermore, Babai b. Farhad also discusses, among other incidents, a case of conversion volunteered by the Jews of Kashan apparently in order to be exempted from the payment of various taxes, among them the *jezyeh*.²² In this context, Abraham Yazdi, a person who refused to convert, is quoted as saying “I am Jewish, openly and secretly. My Jewishness does not depend on anyone; and if there is oppression, I will emigrate from the county . . . Whether I live or die, I was and remain a Jew.”²³ Still, many Jews did convert in Kashan, reflecting the avenue through which survival was possible in a society whose “distinguishing character” was espousal of religion: conversion to the majority’s religion would spare one’s life and property. The community was later allowed to return to Judaism,²⁴ again indicating the primacy of one’s religious identity, and specifically the primacy of the Jews’ religious identity.

Conversions continued in ensuing years,²⁵ the most notorious being that of the Jews of Mashhad in 1839. Nevertheless, many of these Mashhadi new converts to Islam remained loyal to their former Jewish religious identity, and secretly safeguarded their Judaism for decades.²⁶ Seen as *jadid al-Eslams*, or new converts to Islam, the crypto-Jews of Mashhad used to have two separate weddings, with two separate marriage contracts (Heb. sing. *ketubbah*): one would be Muslim, the other, Jewish.²⁷

IRANIAN JEWS

Generally speaking, marriage contracts of the Jews of Iran were preserved mostly from the nineteenth century onwards. They often reflected the Jews’ adhesion to contemporary Muslim art. Furthermore, the Jews of Isfahan were at that time used to introducing Iranian symbols into their marriage contracts, such as two lions facing each other against the background of the sun.²⁸ Jews were acculturated into the indigenous culture, reflecting to some extent espousal of cultural Iranian identity, in addition to their Jewish religious one.²⁹

Jews occasionally connected their religious heroes to Iranian soil. For instance, a common Jewish legend connected Sarah bat Asher, granddaughter of the biblical Jacob, with Isfahan, where her shrine became a major pilgrimage site for the Jews. Isfahan was also seen as the burial place of the prophet Isaiah. The Jews also frequented the tombs of the biblical Esther and Mordechai, believed to be in Hamadan, and of Daniel in Shush, and of Habakkuk in Tuysirkan.³⁰ To an extent, these cases embody Iranian cultural identity. Nevertheless, Jews’ pilgrimages would be often, though not always, undertaken to sites related to Jewish figures only. Furthermore, Jews of Iran would make pilgrimages also to Jewish sites located outside of Iran, such as to Ottoman Iraq for the supposed tomb of ‘Ezra or to Palestine. In other words, in nineteenth-century Iran one’s religious affiliation still dictated one’s prime identity in society; even if both Iranian and Jewish elements constituted the Jews’ identity, before being Jewish Iranians they were Iranian Jews.

EQUAL IRANIANS?

During the latter part of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Iran, certain social segments of society defined their own and others' identity based on religious parameters due to different reasons—religious, political, economic, and social. Nevertheless, glimmers of change were on the horizon. Some social sectors of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Iran would increasingly espouse concepts of nationalism with little or no religious connotations as seen during the Constitutional Revolution (1906–1911). Certain revolutionary enactments improved the status of religious minorities: Equality before the law was granted to the male citizens of Iran, the Muslim *jezyeh* poll tax was repealed, and some religious minorities were to be represented in the *majles*.³¹ In other words, some segments of larger society began altering their views of their own self and identity and, by extension, their perception of the identity of the religious minorities. An encompassing national identity was forming, sometimes at the expense of, other times in addition to, a religious identity. According to this line, the Jews, along with some other religious minorities, were welcomed into the nation of Iran as equal members; they were regarded as Iranians.

This dramatic change should not be overrated because, at the same time, other enactments continued to discriminate against non-Muslims. For example, only a Muslim could be a minister.³² During the years that followed 1906, the situation of the Jews improved, but they were continually maltreated and repressed.³³ In 1909, the Jews of Kermanshah were ransacked; some were killed, many were wounded.³⁴ On October 30, 1910, twelve of the Jews of Shiraz were killed, some fifty were wounded, and the community at large was looted.³⁵ By the same year, the Jews of Iran were “looked down upon and persecuted.”³⁶ As such, the Jews could not feel an equal part of the majority. Some of the Jews regarded their lives in Iran as *galut*, or exile, which was seen as the fate (*goral*) of the Jews.³⁷

IDENTITIES

During the reign of the Pahlavi Dynasty (1925–79) one can more clearly discern the gradual process of transformation in various aspects of the Jews' daily life. Change was also discernable with reference to the topic at hand: various identities of the different Jews started to be more visible, with at least three major trends. First, more than in the past some Jews officially opted for a Zionist sort of Jewish identity, immigrating to Palestine and later to Israel. It should be highlighted, nevertheless, that some of these immigrants moved due to a plethora of socioeconomic and religious reasons, not necessarily for Zionist ideology.³⁸ Second, just as in the past, the majority of the Jews identified with Judaism on the religious level and with the establishment of Israel exhibited affection toward Israel, but now also increasingly identified with Iran and its nationalist ostensibly all-inclusive agenda; they remained in Iran for different reasons, participating in and benefiting from Iran's economic and cultural life. Third, a group of Jews increasingly identified with Iran, with diminishing interest in anything Jewish; some of them converted to Islam or the Baha'i faith, others opted for communism, and still others intermarried and assimilated into larger society. The following discussion will succinctly elaborate on these currents.

REZA SHAH PAHLAVI (R. 1925–41)

Hakham Hayim Moreh (1872–1942), a teacher in the Alliance Israélite Universelle's school in Tehran and one of the leading spiritual leaders of the Jewish community in the early twentieth century has composed several books. At the beginning of his Judeo-Persian *Yedey Eliyahu* (The Hands of Elijah) he indicates the date of the book's publication. Interestingly, he furnishes two dates. One is Jewish—the year 3239 of the revelation of the Torah. This date, he goes on to maintain, corresponds with the other date—the second year of the reign of Reza Shah, the king of the kings of Iran (*Shahan Shah-e Iran*).³⁹ Whereas usage of the Jewish date draws a common denominator of Jews worldwide, the royal date can be viewed, to some extent, as a national date, connecting the author with his surrounding Iranian and Iranian nationalist milieu.

Early in his book Hakham Moreh discusses the duty of humans toward their homeland (*vazifeh-ye ensan nesbat be-vatan-e khod*). He first defines the term *vatan* (homeland): in the language (*dar loghat*) it means a place, while technically (*dar estelah*) it refers to territory (*sarzamin*) in which persons were born and developed and from whose water, air, and crops they enjoy. Because humans are egotistic (*khodkhwah*), they must be attached to all the means of their life. Even if only from an egotistic viewpoint, they must love their *vatan* and make efforts to supply the means for its cultivation and independence (*esteqlal*), and as much as possible prefer their *vatan*'s textiles and manufactures to those of others. All in all, instead of taking advantage (*estefadeh*) of one's *vatan*, one needs to serve (*khedmat*) it. Explicitly addressing the Jewish community, Hakham Moreh maintains that it “needs to sacrifice itself in all ways both for its own *vatan* [i.e., Iran] as well as for the HOLY LAND [*sic*!], which is the *vatan* of its ancestors.”⁴⁰ While loyalty to Judaism and its Jewish Holy Land is not new among the Jews of Iran, the above explicit nationalist sentiment toward Iran is relatively innovative and should be highlighted, especially when it is uttered by an acclaimed rabbi. This nationalist Iranian line of some Jews was to gain more strength during Reza Shah's reign (1925–1941).

Around the eve of Reza Shah's ascendance to the throne, the standard of living among the Jews of Iran was low.⁴¹ Reza Shah was committed to modernizing Iran by ordering the construction of railroads and factories, increasing government bureaucracy, strengthening the army, and investing in the education, agriculture, and industry of the country. The ideology for this enterprise was secular nationalism. As secular nationalism came at the expense of Islam, this process of nationalization was good for the Jews, because now, much more than before, the Jews were perceived as Iranians whose religious persuasion was their own private affair. In light of this nationalist worldview, Jews were allowed into the bureaucracy and were even drafted into the army.⁴² They stopped paying the *jezyeh* poll tax and started to move out of their areas⁴³ into Muslim neighborhoods. Many immigrated to Tehran, some to the oil industry areas. The Jews began engaging in new professions.⁴⁴ In other words, at the encouragement of the Pahlavi state, Jews were increasingly seen as equal citizens of Iran, permitting them to partake in diverse aspects of Iranian life. This, in turn, apparently allowed for a process by which some of the Jews who benefited from the socioeconomic transformations began identifying with Iran on the nationalist level.

This process, however important, should not be overrated, as it occurred simultaneously to the Iranian regime's approaching of Nazi Germany. Mostly from 1936 onward, hundreds of Germans disguised as tourists, as well as many German teachers and experts, arrived in Iran's educational system. In 1937, the chairman of the Iranian parliament, H. Esfandiyari, even visited Adolf Hitler, whereas by the 1940–41 fiscal year, Germany's share in Iran's foreign trade had reached some 45.5 percent. Some Iranian journals and authors propagated racist theories, occasionally emphasizing the Aryan extraction of the Iranians, to the exclusion of Semites, Jews included.⁴⁵ Furthermore, one's original religious affiliation was never completely forgotten. In 1935, the crypto-Jews of Mashhad were still recognized by their Muslim ostensible coreligionists as *jadid al-Eslams*, new converts to Islam⁴⁶—still new and still converts—almost a century after their formal espousal of Islam. One's Jewish religious identity did not efface in the eyes of the majority or of the Jewish minority.⁴⁷ That is, even if a process of acceptance of the Jews into the diverse aspects of life, and by extension into the nation of Iran, is seen, this information signifies the refusal of some social segments to fully accept the Jews as equal Iranians.

MOHAMMAD REZA SHAH PAHLAVI (R. 1941–79)

I

Identity of some Jews in Iran developed from mere Jewish to Jewish-Zionist (thereafter: Zionist) identity. An active manifestation of this nascent Zionist identity was exemplified through some of the Jews' immigration to Palestine and later Israel. Zionist activity in Iran goes back to 1918, following the arrival of the news of the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917. Thereafter, the Zionist movement in Iran underwent vicissitudes.⁴⁸ Some Jews—such as Dr. Habib Levi in 1942—reportedly explicitly viewed the land of Israel and Zion as their homeland (*moleDET*).⁴⁹ Around one-quarter of the Jewish population of Iran—21,910 souls, mostly of lower social echelons—ostensibly voted with their feet in favor of this Zionist identity and immigrated to Israel following its 1948 establishment through the year 1951.⁵⁰

One possible reason for the drive of some of the immigration was some cases of interreligious tensions in Iran. Sometime before or during 1952, anti-Jewish slogans were heard and there were reports of attacks against Jewish houses. Two anti-Semitic political parties, Pan-Iran and SuMKA, were allowed to operate, causing much anxiety and propelling thoughts of immigration among the Jews.⁵¹ An Israeli sent to Iran on an official mission argued in 1959 that the state of Israel is still the aspiration and pride of the majority of Jews of Iran.⁵² The deputy head of the Jewish community of Iran in 1965, Abraham Moreh, viewed the Iranian Jews as wholeheartedly connected to the state of Israel.⁵³ Between 1952 and 1979, around 44,751 Jews left Iran for Israel.⁵⁴

Nevertheless, it must be stated that immigration to Palestine and then to Israel did not stem purely in all cases or even at all from a Zionist drive or a conscious attempt to substitute an existing identity with a new, Zionist one. Whereas some of the immigrants were wholeheartedly ideologically Zionist, others were not. Some of the latter Jews immigrated due to various socioeconomic (e.g., attempts to improve their socioeconomic position) and religious incentives, not necessarily due

to Zionist worldviews. Although both the ideological Zionists and the rest of those who immigrated to Palestine and Israel officially assumed a Zionist identity, their true motivation did not always stem from Zionist dogma. In fact, once some of the new immigrants found that their personal, socioeconomic, and religious hopes were not met in Israel, they returned to Iran.⁵⁵

Just as movement to Palestine and then to Israel did not always reflect a genuine espousal of Zionist identity, remaining in or returning to Iran is not always reflective of pure Iranian identity. In certain regions in Iran, such as Reza'iyeh (Urumiyeh) in 1970, Muslims viewed the Jews as impure.⁵⁶ One may argue that consequently, the Jews could not possibly feel at home in these Iranian locales.⁵⁷ However, despite these cases, some of these Jews did not immigrate due to various reasons, including their economic stability,⁵⁸ wishes to become affluent in the future,⁵⁹ fears of discrimination and of lack of appropriate treatment toward immigrants in Israel,⁶⁰ or fear of physical work in Israel.⁶¹ In other words, one should not automatically regard these Jews' sojourn in Iran as indicative of their preference of an Iranian identity to a Zionist/Israeli one.

II

Even though maltreatment and enmity toward the Jews did not vanish,⁶² during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, Jews were allowed to draw closer to larger society—nearer than most other times throughout their lengthy stay in Iran. Some graduates of the schools of the French Alliance Israélite Universelle, first established in 1898 in Tehran, participated in the different aspects of life in Iran. In 1950, "Ort" established schools in Tehran, teaching technical professions (such as mechanics, electricity, and radio for men, and sewing, secretary and library studies for women). These vocations allowed Jewish women and men increasingly to partake in the economy and improve their economic standing.⁶³ Furthermore, a window of opportunity was opened in the 1960s when the shah inaugurated a series of reforms, known as The White Revolution, intended to improve different facets of the economic and social structure of the country. Jews were welcome to partake in this project, benefiting both themselves and their country. In 1965, 30 percent of the textile merchants in Tehran were Jews. Also, Jews were accepted to government schools and universities. Many became physicians and pharmacists. In 1976, there were six hundred Jewish physicians, in other words, 6 percent of the country's physicians, while the Jews constituted merely one-quarter of 1 percent of Iranian society.⁶⁴ There were 80 Jewish professors and teachers in institutions of higher education, or 2 percent of the four thousand professors in the country.⁶⁵ Many Jews left their Jewish neighborhoods for Muslim areas in their own cities;⁶⁶ many others moved to Tehran⁶⁷ because of the improvements there in various fields, such as education, health care, and construction. Although they were still occasionally harassed, mostly in the small cities, they now enjoyed unprecedented protection and economic progress.⁶⁸ In retrospect, the period from the 1960s to the 1970s was one of the most successful periods in the history of the Jews of Iran.⁶⁹

Parallel and in consequent to this process was a gradual emergence of a new stream of identity among some Jews. To an extent bordering on the margins of the aforementioned group of Zionists, there were many other Jews who kept ties to Judaism in various ways and in varying degrees,⁷⁰ but for whom Judaism or sympathy for Israel and Zionism did not translate to active immigration to Israel.

Loving Israel could be demonstrated, for instance, by donating money to different causes in Israel.⁷¹ This love, however, did not deter them from simultaneously cultivating commitment to the local society and culture,⁷² which they regarded as their economic base and cultural source of orientation—in short, their home. They increasingly assumed Iranian names,⁷³ participated in Iranian festivities and national holidays, and were drafted to the Iranian army. These Jews benefited from the socioeconomic transformations sweeping over Iran, causing them to identify with this process and with Iran at large.

Evidence testifies to the remoteness of some other Jews from Israel and Zionism. The Jewish representative in the *majles*, Mr. Morad Aryeh, is said to have asserted toward the end of the 1950s that all the Jews of Iran are Iranians; they enjoy complete equality and freedom under the protection of the shah.⁷⁴ In 1961, one reporter argued that the Jews of Shiraz, as well as other places in Iran, did not feel close to Israel, nor did most of them think of immigrating to it.⁷⁵ Around 1970, the Jews of Hamadan were reportedly seen by the head of their community as “fettered in iron chains” to their business and properties,⁷⁶ causing them not to be interested in immigration to Israel. A report from 1978 indicated that the Jews were “disconnected from Zionism.”⁷⁷ From 1966 until the Islamic Revolution, there were barely any Iranian immigrants to Israel.⁷⁸

Broadly speaking, during that time Jews would be seen by the authorities as equals to the majority population, enjoying rights and subject to obligations. One of these obligations was the service in the army of Iran. No doubt a major vehicle for equality and national unity, the army consisted of Jews and others. Nevertheless, even during those days and even in the army, Jews would occasionally be reminded of their different religious orientation. For instance, the Jew Mansur Ostad who was a soldier in the Iranian army in 1966 was instructed to wear a badge with his name on his breast. This badge read “Mansur Kalimi Ostad.”⁷⁹ “Kalimi” referred to the fact that he was of the religion of *kalim Allah* (the one with whom Allah spoke—that is, Moses): that is, Mr. Ostad was of the faith of Moses; he was Jewish. In other words, although they were integrating a great deal into society and its symbol of national unity, the army, the Jews were still seen by their government and surrounding society as somewhat different. In the eyes of the authorities, major sections of society, and the Jews themselves, they were not just Iranians but still Iranian Jews.

On other occasions, the Jews’ identity was virtually imposed on them by some of their surrounding Iranian Muslim compatriots. For instance, in 1968 the Israeli soccer team lost against the Iranian team in the Asian Nations Cup. Reportedly, the Israeli team was advised intentionally to lose for the sake of the safety of the local Jewish population. The following day, a Jew who regarded himself as Jewish but was “never interested” in Judaism nor in Israel and whose relationships with non-Jews were “rather good” arrived to his work place. His non-Jewish supervisor called him in, using the name of one of the Israeli soccer players, Spiegel. When the local Jew questioned this assertion, the supervisor responded, “You are a Jew like all [other] Jews, and your name should be Spiegel.” The Jew decided to move to Israel.⁸⁰

III

Another growing tendency among some of the Jews was to abandon Judaism in varying degrees in favor of other sorts of identities that were espoused by members

of larger society. One of the attractive ideologies in the 1950s was communism. The early 1950s witnessed the peak of communist activity in Iran. The communist Tudeh Party, which was heavily involved in politics, dug deep roots in Jewish society, "mainly" among Jewish youth. The communists leveled criticism against local and foreign Jewish institutions (e.g., The Zionist Federation, The Joint, Ort, and The Jewish Agency).⁸¹ A survey of the Jewish Agency reported in April 1952 that the Jewish section of the Communist [Tudeh] Party of Iran increased its activity. "This is the only organization that is well organized and is very active in the Jewish circles," argued the report. The communists won over a large portion of the Jewish academic youth; their activity was very strong in the schools of the Alliance Israélite Universelle as well as among Jewish students elsewhere. Interestingly, they used to hold a strong position in the Zionist organization of The Halus (The Vanguard), but most of them were removed from it; they were also expelled from the schools of Ort. One of their organs, The Institute for Jewish Advanced Culture, disseminated anti-Israel propaganda.⁸² Occasional references maintain that communists sought to thwart Zionist activity in various places, including Sanandaj.⁸³ Jewish communist newspapers were published during the end of the 1940s to the early 1950s, between 1979 and 1989, and from 2000 on.⁸⁴

Other Jews integrated into the most basic common denominator of local society by voluntarily converting to Islam. The very attempt to convert to Islam indicates that religion was still a major dividing line in society and, more importantly, that identity was still sometimes defined, at least in part, based on one's religious affiliation. Cases of conversion could be seen as an attempt to identify with larger society, thereby upgrading one's socioeconomic status. Examples include two Jewish women who voluntarily embraced Islam in Isfahan in the early 1950s⁸⁵ or a young Jew who converted to Islam and married a Muslim woman, apparently in Miyanduab in 1970 or before.⁸⁶ Other Jews opted for the Baha'i faith.⁸⁷ The scope of Jewish conversion is difficult to determine.⁸⁸

Assimilation of some Jews into society did not always take the form of espousal of a certain ideology or a way of life, such as Communism, Islam, or Baha'ism. Some Jews were prone to assimilation simply because of their residence in villages,⁸⁹ where they dwelled in the midst of a majority of non-Jews. They were distant from Jewish central organizations and communal bodies, and their identification with and knowledge of Judaism was consequently diminished. Assimilated Jews increasingly knew less about Judaism and practiced it on a lessening degree.⁹⁰ They increasingly viewed themselves as Iranians, as demonstrated by their language, culture, literature, and food, which were all geared toward Iran and anything Iranian.

In the 1960s and 1970s there were growing signs of this tendency. One of the assimilating elements was youngsters and students⁹¹ who were exposed to nationalist and secular strands of thought and were motivated to partake in society due to their education and professions; they were eager to enjoy the benefits of their participation in Iranian society. The aforementioned indigenous Jew (nicknamed by his non-Jewish boss as "Spiegel") in Iran of 1968⁹² seems to have been one such a case, reflecting a broader proclivity of some Jews. Impacted by the growing acceptance of Jews to diverse aspects of society and the economy as depicted above, some Jews increasingly grew apathetic to Judaism.⁹³ Cases of intermarriages were reported:⁹⁴ One case involved a woman who abandoned her Jewish husband and married a Muslim one;⁹⁵ other instances included a Jew who married two ladies,

one Jewish and one Muslim, with three children from each of them;⁹⁶ and a Jew who married several wives, one of whom was Muslim.⁹⁷

Around the early 1970s, Mordechai Bar-On, head of the Youth and The Halus (The Vanguard) Department at the Jewish Agency, argued that the Jews of Iran were seriously pondering (*mitehabtim qashot*) their Jewish identity.⁹⁸ The majority of the Jews saw their future life developing in Iran, and cases of intermarriage were increasing, maintained Bar-On.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, "the Jews do not forget their Jewishness for a minute and Muslims do not let them forget it." Some of the Jews desired to be "super-Iranian," to assimilate into society,¹⁰⁰ but, according to this report, Muslims still rejected them.¹⁰¹

IN AN ISLAMIC STATE

The tendency of some Jews to emphasize their Iranian orientation continued following the 1979 revolution: "Against the wishes of their elders, many Jewish students joined the revolution, hoping to recast their identities as secular Iranians, who would then assimilate seamlessly into the fabric of the utopia the revolution promised."¹⁰² Others maintained a strong anti-Zionist line.¹⁰³ Questioned as to what he would do in the case of an attack on Iran, one Jew identifying as a "secular humanist" maintained "if Israel bombed us, I feel more responsible for my country [i.e., Iran]."¹⁰⁴

At the same time, a reawakening of Jewish religious identity began to be felt among some of the Jews of Iran in the years that followed the revolution. The revolution changed the official identity of Iran, now named the Islamic Republic of Iran, indicating the importance of Islam in determining affairs in the country. Article 19 of the constitution of the Islamic Republic reads, "Whatever the ethnic group or tribe to which they belong, all people of Iran enjoy equal rights, and factors such as color, race, and language do not bestow any privilege."¹⁰⁵ This article is no doubt based on Western principles and reflects those social segments' desire to offer equality. Nevertheless, differences based on sex or religious affiliation are not mentioned. That is, here there is no guarantee that women and religious minorities will be offered equality. Article 19 may contradict article 14: The government and "all Muslims are duty bound to treat non-Muslims in an ethical fashion and in accordance with Islamic justice and equity and to respect their human rights." Religious minorities are "free to perform their religious ceremonies." However, as article 13 maintains, the "only recognized" minorities entitled to this are Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians. In other words, only religious minorities recognized in Islam, to the exclusion of Baha'is, will enjoy this right. The Islamic Republic regards Jews as members of a religious minority dwelling in a Muslim state. In reality, the Jews are granted a Jewish representative in the *majles*, indicating that they are seen first as having a different religious persuasion and communal affiliation. That is, in the eyes of the government, the Jews' prime identity is based on their different religious orientation; they are regarded as Jews living within a national framework of a Muslim state.

That the government saw the Jews through religious lenses is apparently one of the reasons that caused some of the Jews to strengthen their religious bonds with Judaism and identify themselves stronger than before as Jews with Jewish values and demeanor. One Jew in contemporary Iran maintains that after the revolution,

the majority of the Jews in Iran became religious. He explains that it is easier to be religious in a religious environment.¹⁰⁶ Emphasizing the religiosity of the Jews of Shiraz, that community's president has said, "We follow the Torah . . . We are the most religious community in all of Iran . . . The Muslims of Iran have their city of Qom. The Jews have Shiraz. It is our Jerusalem."¹⁰⁷

While the leader of the revolution, Ayatollah Khomeyni (d. 1989), used anti-Jewish imagery in his sermons and writings before the revolution, he later made a distinction between Jews and Israelis/Zionists. Khomeyni viewed Israel and Zionism as an arm of a Western attempt to take over Muslim lands and defeat Islam. As such, Israel and Zionism are seen as existential foes to Islam, and those Jews in Iran who were regarded as connected to Israel or Zionism were to be severely punished. The anti-Israel atmosphere in Iran naturally led indigenous Jews to disassociate themselves from Israel, to the extent that they criticized Israel on various grounds, including its stance on the Palestinian issue. This anti-Israel context reshaped some of the Jews' identity: they would identify with Judaism religiously, but sometimes only as second to their Iranian national identity. Some Jews occasionally emphasize the Iranian component of their identity: Yousef Kohen, the then representative of the Jews in the *majles* viewed already in December 1978 or January 1979 the "great nation (*mellat*) of Iran" as "our compatriot brothers (*baradaran-e ham vatan*);" he maintained that the destiny (*sarnevash*) of the Jewish community is not disconnected from the nation of Iran. Further, he asserted that in addition to the national and patriotic attachments (*'ala'eq-e melli va mihani*) it has with the land of Iran, the Jewish community of Iran has firm links with its compatriot Muslim believers.¹⁰⁸ Maurice Mo'tamed, a former representative of the Jews in the *majles* (2000–2007), said in an interview, "We [i.e., the Jews of Iran] are a part (*qesmat*) of the nation (*mellat*) of Iran."¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, he is said to have asserted that he is Iranian first, then Jewish.¹¹⁰ The editor of the Jewish magazine [*Ofegh*] *Bina* argues that "we cannot separate our Persianness from our Jewishness; we are one body."¹¹¹ Harun Yashai, a Jewish community leader, says that Iran is the cultural homeland of the Jews (*vatan-e farhangi-ye Yahudiha*), and that there are more sites related to Jewish culture in Iran than in Israel.¹¹² Dr. Siamak Moresadegh, the representative of the Jews in the *majles* (from 2008 on), has "emotional affinity with Israel, though his desire to see justice for the Palestinians kept him from really identifying with the place in any meaningful way."¹¹³ "More candidly," the president of the Jewish community of Shiraz said, "we would like the state of Israel, but not the government that's there now."¹¹⁴ Having returned from a visit to Israel, an Isfahani Jewish shopkeeper in yarmulke asserted that he likes it there: "It's okay. But this is my home, here in Iran."¹¹⁵ Addressing her Jewish brethren in the West, a Jewish woman in Iran is quoted as saying that "denying Iranian identity is actually denying Jewish identity. Do the conspirators and/or their audience not know that if a Jewish Iranian denies being Iranian, he will no longer be Jewish, either?"¹¹⁶

It is not clear to what degree the statements in the aforementioned paragraphs should be taken seriously and literally, or should be questioned and construed as another attempt to safeguard Jews who live in a country that does not have peaceful relations with Israel.

MIGRATION

Another consequence of the 1979 revolution was a gradual mass migration of Iranians, including the majority of the Jews, over the subsequent years and decades to countries abroad. The movement from Iran to different places did not constitute a complete break from their past identity/ies. Following their immigration from Iran, some of the patterns recognized in Iran from Pahlavi times were seen, to an extent, outside of Iran among some Jews. Some would identify with Iran on varying degrees, while exhibiting different levels of interest or disinterest in Judaism. Some would emphasize their Jewish identity on different and occasionally new levels (Zionist, Reform, Conservative, and different Orthodox approaches to Judaism¹¹⁷) while sometimes turning their back on Iran and anything Iranian either completely or partly. Integration into American Jewish society can occasionally be seen on varying degrees,¹¹⁸ while some of the Jews intermarry into non-Jewish American society.¹¹⁹

At least for part of the immigrants, their affiliation with Iran does not seem to have completely vanished with their immigration. Like other emigrants from Iran, they gradually embraced an additional identity or identities in their new destinations, without totally forfeiting their previous one/s. They left Iran for various reasons, but some still view it as their home. Depicting how she was treated as impure (*najes*) by her school teacher in Iran, an interviewed Jewish girl Parandis asserts that they love Iran; Iran is their homeland (*vatan*), but the humiliations they suffered left them no other choice but to leave.¹²⁰ Another example is of Mr. Elyas Eshaqyan (Elias Eshaghian), a former principal and teacher of the Alliance Israélite Universelle's schools in Isfahan, Yazd, Sanandaj, and Tehran, who refers to his Iranian compatriots (*ham mihan-e Irani*) in his memoirs.¹²¹ Discussing the close relations of Jews with Iran, he maintains that his heart is occupied with his birthplace of Iran. Iran was his homeland (*vatan*) and Jerusalem his *qiblah* (place toward which prayers are directed) of belief.¹²² He is proud to be both an Iranian and a Jewish monotheist.¹²³ Another example is Mr. Yousef Sharifi, who recalls the treatment he received as an Iranian citizen (*shahrvand-e Irani*) in Iran.¹²⁴ Addressing his immigration from Iran, he refers to the country he left behind as *mihan*, or homeland.¹²⁵ At the same time, there were those who left Iran who mostly emphasized their Jewish background, and at times their Jewish-Zionist affiliation. In one of the concluding paragraphs of his memoirs, Dr. Habib Levi regards being a Zionist as being "the greatest national (*melli*) and religious duty of any Jew."¹²⁶

It is noteworthy that some Jews of Iranian origin living abroad seek to connect with other Jews of the same Iranian origin; they have their own Iranian communal organizations and synagogues. Along these lines, these Jews continue to enjoy Persian media (newspapers, radio, television, and Internet sites) from Iran and from abroad as well as Persian food while residing outside of Iran. Some of them deem it preferable to marry with those of Iranian origin or descent. Occasionally, they even still celebrate Iranian festivals, such as the Iranian New Year of the *nowruz*. These facts may indicate that these immigrants' memories still register and espouse their previous identity/ies of the old country. These examples can be read as indicative of their cultural Iranian identity, but they may be also construed as utilitarian attempts to address needs in the most efficient and easy way within the framework of the familiar culture of Iran and of the Persian culture and language.

In both the United States and Israel, individuals as well as groups remember and at times cherish their connection to Iran, but they also exercise commitment to their place of current residence and its culture.¹²⁷ A few examples will suffice: 30 Years After is a “501(c)(3) non-profit organization, whose mission is to promote the participation and leadership of Iranian American Jews in American political, civic and Jewish life”¹²⁸ with activists in Los Angeles and New York. Volunteers of this group are called to identify on which one of the following four divisions they would like to serve:

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT: (Power Brunches; receptions and meetings with elected officials; events on political and civic issues; voter registration drives).

IRAN ACTIVISM: (Organizing events related to Iran’s nuclear program and human rights violations; working on Iran-related legislation and initiatives; organizing rallies; contacting elected officials and media outlets about these issues).

ISRAEL ADVOCACY: (Helping educate and engage Iranian Jews in Israel advocacy through events, workshops, and missions to Israel).

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS: (Develop programs and community service projects aimed at engaging Iranian Jews in Jewish community activities; documenting the Iranian Jewish experience through an oral history project called “Our Legacy Project”).¹²⁹

As illustrated, 30 Years After focuses on American, Iranian, Israeli, and Jewish issues, which may be construed as indicative of their various interests and loyalties and possibly also of their diverse identities.¹³⁰ It is important to note that this group consists of the first generation of Jews of Iranian origins who are raised in the United States.

Some Jews of Iranian origin who live in Israel highlight their Iranian descent.¹³¹ On the topic of Iranian food, Mrs. Ne’imah Teflin-Menashri, a native of Golpaygan, says that while preparing this food in Israel, the smell and taste of it attach her immediately to her past as well as connect her family members with “their roots.”¹³² She asserts that her and her husband’s “long years in Israel did not dull the memories [of their life in Iran], and we feel that we have deep roots also in Iran, our homeland.”¹³³ Depicting Jewish life in Iran, she maintains that Jewish boys in Iran used to have two names: a biblical Hebrew one and a common Persian one. Consequently, in Israel the majority of immigrants from Iran who “preserved the [Iranian] heritage” go by Persian names.¹³⁴ “Roots,” “homeland,” and “heritage” are the terms used, showing strong, warm feelings toward Iran and its culture and seemingly also reflecting a certain level of Iranian identity in Israel, in addition to Jewish and Israeli identities.

Asserting that Iran’s Jewry has an important share in shaping “the music, culture, and parties”¹³⁵ in Iran, Mrs. Teflin-Menashri later indicates that almost any new disc or video cassette of Persian music produced in the world can be found in Israel.¹³⁶ She seems to love Persian music of different styles and keeps herself updated on relatively recent Iranian musicians.¹³⁷ Some Jews in Israel write poetry in Persian, which they recite for poetry nights.¹³⁸ Following his immigration to Israel, Mrs. Teflin-Menashri’s husband, Yossi, continued to nourish Persian culture¹³⁹ and brought a large library of Persian books with him. Persian books and newspapers can be found in Israel at the Head Organization of Jewish immigrants

from Iran.¹⁴⁰ Some Jews of Iranian origin did not forfeit their Iranian background; they still identify with Iran on the cultural level. However, this does not seem to assume Iranian national identity on their part, as it is only reasonable for immigrants to preserve aspects of their past and enjoy the culture of their early days.

Mrs. Tefilin-Menashri enumerates the names of those Israelis “from amongst the sons of the [Iranian] community” that rose to importance in Israeli society: a President, Chiefs of Staff and army officers, a singer, university professors, and a comedian, among others.¹⁴¹ Clearly, a sense of an Iranian “community” in Israel exists in her worldview, which is indicative of her pride in her Iranian origins. Her very attempt at separating a group of Jews that happened to arrive from Iran and molding them into a “community” within Israeli society can also signify a certain level of loyalty to her Iranian origins. Nevertheless, the fact that Mrs. Tefilin-Menashri and her ilk highlight their Iranian background cannot be seen in this context as indicative of their sort of Iranian identity, admixed with their other Jewish and Israeli identities. At times, it seems that this emphasis on one’s Iranian descent within the Israeli framework is rooted in a common drive where Jews of diverse ethnic origins highlight their supposed “group” contribution to Israeli society. This, in turn, is intended to receive larger Israeli society’s recognition and acceptance of Jews of Iranian descent as well as to build respect toward them. In other words, emphasis on one’s Iranian origins in Israel can be occasionally geared toward Israeli society more than anything else.

SUBIDENTITIES

One brief reference should be made to the fact that, both while in Iran and once they immigrate to foreign lands, some Jews espouse a subidentity in addition to the other more general circles of identity they already espouse. This subidentity is based on this group’s feelings of being part of a group or community that is smaller than the entire Jewry of Iran. In other words, this group or community shares their general identity/ies with the rest of the Jews of Iran but would regard itself as separated or unique in some way compared to the rest of the Jews of Iran.

Forcibly converted in 1839, Jews of Mashhad led Jewish life in secrecy for decades. Following a common practice of the time, as well as preventing Muslims from asking for their daughters in marriage, the crypto-Jews of Mashhad married their children at a very young age but only within the Jewish community. In fact, the Jews of Mashhad became a one large family due to marriages between relatives.¹⁴² More importantly, the Jews of Mashhad were accustomed to marry only within the Jewish community of Mashhad, to the exclusion of other Jews,¹⁴³ possibly under the influence of their endeavor to avoid marrying Muslims. Seeking to preserve their cohesion in the midst of a Muslim society, the community of the Mashhad Jews developed a sense of collective responsibility, which was demonstrated even after emigration from Mashhad. The Jewish Mashhadis who resided in Jerusalem were supported by their Mashhad brethren in London.¹⁴⁴ Mashhad immigrants to Palestine were supported by former immigrants or by the committee of the Mashhad community.¹⁴⁵ Their unique history instilled in the hearts of the Jews of Mashhad a sense of pride over the rest of the Jews of Iran.¹⁴⁶

Finally, similarly to some other Jews around the world, some Iranian Jews—apparently a very small minority among them—claim descent from the Jews of

Spain. Hakham Hayim Moreh refers to himself as “*ha-Sefaradi*,” the Spaniard.¹⁴⁷ Hakham Yedidya Shofet regards himself as a descendant of those Jews expelled from Spain.¹⁴⁸ Such a lineage was and sometimes still is seen in certain Jewish circles as entailing pride and respect toward those who hold this Spanish pedigree.

* * *

Throughout the last several centuries of their residence in Iran, if not earlier, the Jews were immersed in the indigenous Irano-Muslim culture a great deal, with a high level of acculturation; on the cultural level they identified with Iran. Still, the fact that larger society regarded the world through religious lenses contributed to the sense that the central “distinguishing character” in the Jews’ identity was their religion. For many years, the Jews of Iran saw themselves and were perceived by others first and foremost as espousing a different set of beliefs, practices, and religion. When segments of society from around the time of the Constitutional Revolution, and more so under the Pahlavis, increasingly espoused a nationalist agenda that allowed for the Jews’ participation in society, a slow process of redefining the Jews’ identity commenced. Different identities were more visibly seen, on varying degrees negotiating their place and importance at the expense of religion as the prime “distinguishing character” in the Jews’ identity. To some extent, the story of the emergence of various identities among the Jews, at times at the expense of one’s religious affiliation, reflects a broader phenomenon affecting Iranian society at large. Larger society, with its different members, including its Jews, has been and still is pondering its identity or set of identities in the face of changes and challenges in modern times.

NOTES

1. Occasionally, Jews were barred from learning the Perso-Arabic alphabet because that would have given them access to the Qur'an, which they were barred from reading.
2. V. Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 12–14, 26–31. Elaboration in idem, “A Dialogue between God and Satan in Shahin's *Breshit* [-*Namah*],” in *Irano-Judaica III*, ed. S. Shaked and A. Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi, 1994), 127–41.
3. Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 31.
4. A. Netzer, *Osar Kitvey ha-Yad shel Yehudey Paras be-Makhon Ben-Zvi* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi, 1985), 30; V. Moreen, “*Is[h]ma'iliyat*: A Judeo-Persian Account of the Building of the Ka'ba,” in *Judaism and Islam*, ed., B. Hary et al. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2000), 185–202.
5. Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 29.
6. *Ibid.*, 30.
7. Elaboration in V. Moreen, “The ‘Iranization’ of Biblical Heroes in Judeo-Persian Epics: Shahin's *Ardashir-namah* and *Ezra-namah*,” *Iranian Studies* 29 (1996), 321–38.
8. Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 28, 103–104.
9. D. Yeroushalmi, *The Judeo-Persian Poet 'Emrani and His 'Book of Treasure'* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 8–9, 33–35, 40–41.
10. *Ibid.*, 61–66.
11. Yehudah b. El'azar, *Hovot Yehudah*, ed. and trans. A. Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi, 1995), 20–21, 25.
12. Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 110–12. That is, the Torah we possess is divine.

13. Yeroushalmi, *The Judeo-Persian Poet 'Emrani*, 85. Other examples: Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 272–74, 300.
14. Yehudah b. El'azar, *Hovot Yehudah*, 78 (trans. 286), 171 (trans. 391), 217–18 (trans. 449), 226 (trans. 459), 232 (trans. 467), 538–540. V. Moreen, “A Seventeenth-Century Iranian Rabbi's Polemical Remarks on Jews, Christians, and Muslims,” in *Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors*, ed. M. Mazzaoui (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2003), 157–68.
15. Whereas in the past (for instance, in a lecture at Yeshiva University, February 21, 2007) I used to view identity of the Jews of Iran until the late nineteenth century as hybrid composed of two (Jewish and Iranian) inextricable parts of the same significance, I now tend more to view it as religiously Jewish and culturally Iranian, with the former more important during that time, because society gave it more weight by marking social boundaries based on one's religious affiliation.
16. Moreen, *In Queen Esther's Garden*, 245, quoting Hizqiyah who converted to Islam, apparently with the rest of his community. See also A. Netzer, “Shir Qinah me-et ha-Anus Hizqiyah,” in Bat-Yeor, *Ha-Dhimmim* (Jerusalem: Kanah, 1986), 299, 302.
17. V. Moreen, *Iranian Jewry's Hour of Peril and Heroism* (New York: The American Academy for Jewish Research, 1987).
18. *Ibid.*, 28.
19. V. Moreen, *Iranian Jewry during the Afghan Invasion. The Kitab-i Sar Guzashat-i Kashan of Babai b. Farhad* (Stuttgart: Steiner-Verlag, 1990), 44.
20. *Ibid.*, 20.
21. *Ibid.*, 21–25.
22. *Ibid.*, 17, 34–40. Babai b. Farhad goes on to elaborate on further conversions related to this one.
23. *Ibid.*, 39.
24. *Ibid.*, 34n152, 50–53. The text continues with the different account of the events as given by Mashiah b. Raphael.
25. D. Tsadik, “Religious Disputations of Imami Shi'is against Judaism in the Late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” *Studia Iranica* 34 (2005), 99–100. *Idem*. *Between Foreigners and Shi'is* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), index under “conversion to Islam” and “forced conversions.”
26. On the Jews of Mashhad: R. Patai, *Jadid al-Islam* (Detroit, IN: Wayne State University, 1997).
27. S. Sabar, “Ha-Ketubbah ha-Me'uteret be-Iran,” in *Qehilot Israel ba-Mizrah ba-Meot ha-Tsha' 'Esreh ve-ha-'Esrin; Iran*, ed. H. Saadoun (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, Hebrew University, and the Ministry of Education and Culture, 2005), 193–94. J. Pirnazar, “The Anusim of Mashhad,” in *Esther's Children*, ed. H. Sharshar (Beverly Hills, CA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 126–29.
28. Sabar, “Ha-Ketubbah,” 191–92.
29. This can be possibly demonstrated with other examples. S. Soroudi, “Judeo-Persian Religious Oath Formulas as Compared with Non-Jewish Iranian Traditions,” in *Irano-Judaica II*, ed. S. Shaked and A. Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi, 1990), 167–79; *idem*, “*Sofreh* of Elijah the Prophet: A Pre-Islamic Iranian Ritual?” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, no. 27 (2002): 463–74.
30. Tsadik, *Between Foreigners and Shi'is*, 141–42, 248–49.
31. D. Tsadik, “The Legal Status of Religious Minorities: Imami Shi'i Law and Iran's Constitutional Revolution,” *Islamic Law and Society* 10, no. 3 (2003): 406. Occasionally the constitutional press reflected “enlightened attitude toward religious minorities” and rejected anti-Semitism. See S. Soroudi, *Persian Literature and Judeo-Persian Culture*, ed. H. E. Chehabi (Boston: Ilex Foundation, 2010), 372.
32. Tsadik, “Legal Status,” 407–8.

33. D. Tsadik, "Jews in the Pre-Constitutional Years: The Shiraz Incident of 1905," *Iranian Studies*, no. 43 (2010): 261–63.
34. A. Cohen, *Ha-Qehilah ha-Yehudit be-Kermanshah* (Jerusalem: Misrad ha-Hinukh ve-ha-Tarbut, 1992), 19–21. H. Kermanshachi, *Tabavvulat-e Ijtima'i-ye Yahudiyan-e Iran dar Qarn-e Bistom* (Los Angeles, CA: Ketab, 2007), 340–47.
35. D. Littman, "Jews under Muslim Rule: The Case of Persia," *The Wiener Library Bulletin*, new series, nos. 49/50, 32 (1979): 12–13.
36. E. C. Sykes, *Persia and Its People* (London: Methuen & Co., 1910), 128.
37. D. Omid, *Emunah ve-Tiqvah* (Jerusalem: Menahem, 1981), 11. Note that the term *galut* (exile) is occasionally used in the Jews' writings but does not always denote their identity remoteness from Iran.
38. As mentioned below, some members of this group would not forget their Iranian origin, even after immigrating to Israel.
39. H. Moreh, *Yedey Eliyahu* (Tehran: 1927), introduction, 4. Ibid., 629–32 offers a prayer for Reza Shah in Hebrew followed by a Judeo-Persian translation. Such a Jewish prayer is rather common among Jews in their different diasporas to their respective non-Jewish rulers.
40. Moreh, *Yedey Eliyahu*, 20–21. The quote reads: "*Mellat-e Esra'il ham bayad be-vatan-e khod har guneh fada kari dashteh bashad va-niz be-eres ha-qedusheh keh vatan-e ajdad-e u ast.*" Other relevant passages are on pp. 21–24, 27–28.
41. Of some relevance are I. Ben Zvi, *Nidbey Israel* (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi, 1966), 123; H. Sadok, *Yahadut Iran bi-Tqufat ha-Shoshelet ha-Pahlavit* (Israel: Misag, 1991), 204, referring to the early 1920s.
42. For example, Y. Shofet, *Khaterat-e Hakham Yedidya Shofet* (Los Angeles, CA: Bonyad-e Farhangi-ye Hakham Yedidya Shofet, 2000), 183–84; E. Khalili, *Yadi az Gozashtehha* (Los Angeles, CA: Ketab, 2004), 165ff; M. Farivar, *Hadis-e Yek Farhang* (Los Angeles, CA, 2007), 126–27.
43. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 73, referring to the early 1920s.
44. For example, Farivar, *Hadis-e Yek Farhang*, 229.
45. A. Netzer, "Ha-Antishemiyut be-Iran, 1925–1950," *Pe'amim*, no. 29 (1987): 5–31; J. Pirnazar, "Jang-e Jahani-ye Dovvom va-Jami'eh-ye Yahud dar Iran," in *Terua; The History of Contemporary Iranian Jews*, ed. H. Sarshar and H. Sarshar (Beverly Hills, CA: Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History, 1996), 1:95–105. Of importance is also Soroudi, *Persian Literature and Judeo-Persian Culture*, 373–76.
46. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 25.
47. Farivar, *Hadis-e Yek Farhang*, 117 on Muslims viewing Jews as impure. On pressure on a Jewish soldier to embrace Islam, see H. Levi, *Khaterat-e Man* (Los Angeles, CA: Ketab, 2002), 81–82, 199.
48. D. Tsadik, "Judeo-Persian Communities of Iran: V: (1) Communities: Early Zionist Activity," *ELr*.
49. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 29. Writing his memoirs in the early 1980s, Habib Levi writes (Levi, *Khaterat*, 176) that most of his memoirs are related to the land of Israel. Of relevance is Levi, *Khaterat*, 185–202.
50. A. Netzer, "Ha-Demografyah," in *Qehilot Israel ba-Mizrah ba-Meot ha-Tsha' 'Esreh ve-ha-'Esrin; Iran*, ed. H. Saadoun (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, Hebrew University, and the Ministry of Education and Culture, 2005), 28, 40. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 61–62. Of importance is D. Yeroushalmi, "Israel: The Jewish Persian Community," *ELr*.
51. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 73–74.
52. Ibid., 172.
53. Ibid., 156.
54. Netzer, "Ha-Demografyah," 40.

55. For example, Sadok, *Yahadut*, 138, 143, 167, 172, 204, 209, 218, 230, 241, 250–51, 255, 257, 314, 334, 356, 359, 419, 422, 465, 468–69, 474–75, 477–78, 489, 495–97, 506, 508–9, 511.
56. Ibid., 110–11. On impurity of the Jews, see also p. 480; H. Sarshar, “In Exile at Home,” in L. Khazzoom, *The Flying Camel* (New York: Seal Press, 2003), 126n1, 234; S. Soroudi, “The Concept of Jewish Impurity and Its Reflection in Persian and Judeo-Persian Traditions,” in *Irano-Judaica III*, ed. S. Shaked and A. Netzer (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi, 1994), 154–60 (based on materials from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries).
57. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 301–3, 305–9, on the hatred toward the Jews of Iran following the Six Days War as well as following soccer games in 1968 and 1970 between Iran and Israel. On discrimination against Jews at the job market: *ibid.*, 490. On Jews as seen as impure in 1977: R. Hakakian, *Journey from the Land of No* (New York: Crown, 2004), 46. F. Goldin, *Wedding Song* (Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 2003), 165: “A woman and a Jew, I didn’t belong to my country of birth [i.e., Iran].”
58. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 110–11. Also, pp. 165–66, 174–76 where certain Jewish institutions (e.g., The Joint, Ort, and Osar ha-Torah) are mentioned as obstruction to immigration to Israel.
59. Ibid., 173.
60. Ibid., 356–57, 359, 476. Letters of immigrants in Israel to their brethren in Iran, negatively depicting Israel and their lives there: *ibid.*, 161, 172, 199, 203–4, 227, 473, 485.
61. Ibid., 172, 476.
62. For example, on Passover 1946, the crypto-Jews of Mashhad faced a blood-libel accusation. See B. Yehoshua, *Dyuqanah shel Qehilat ha-Anusim be-Mashhad she-be-Iran* (Jerusalem: Rimon, 1980), 41–43. Also, Sadok, *Yahadut*, 473 (article 2; occasional “non-supportive” attitude of non-Jews in 1959 Hamadan). Ibid., 251 (swastika written on a wall near a Jew’s house around 1970). Goldin, *Wedding Song*, 122 (swastika); on views of Jews as *najes* (impure), *ibid.*, 119, 123, 126.
63. Of relevance is D. Ysehaqov, “Megamot Leumiyot ve-Kalkaliyot be-Iran ve-Hashlakhoteyhen ‘al ha-Mi’ut ha-Yehudi ba-Shanim 1949–1956” (Ramat Gan: unpublished MA thesis, 2007), 82–86.
64. D. Tsadik, “Ha-Yehudim be-Kalkalat ha-Medinah,” in *Qehilot Israel ba-Mizrah ba-Meot ha-Tsha’ Esreh ve-ha-‘Esrin; Iran*, ed. H. Saadoun (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, Hebrew University, and the Ministry of Education and Culture, 2005), 51.
65. A. Netzer, “Ha-Ares ve-Yehudeyhah,” in *Qehilot Israel ba-Mizrah ba-Meot ha-Tsha’ Esreh ve-ha-‘Esrin; Iran*, ed. H. Saadoun (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, Hebrew University, and the Ministry of Education and Culture, 2005), 21.
66. Goldin, *Wedding Song*, 113, 117.
67. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 88, 243, 272, 469.
68. Ibid., 240–42, 253, 334, 523.
69. On a Jew who viewed those days as “good times for Iranian Jews, never better,” see Goldin, *Wedding Song*, 168.
70. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 273. On Jews who strongly identified with Judaism and Jews worldwide, L. Loeb, *Outcaste; Jewish Life in Southern Iran* (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1977), 173–75.
71. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 97, 214–15, 235, 362, 439–40.
72. Ibid., 273, 523. Of importance is M. Ezri, *Mi Bakhem mi-Kol ‘Ammo* (Or Yehudah: Hed Arzi, 2001), 15–16.
73. Kermanshachi, *Tahavvolat*, 377.
74. Ezri, *Mi Bakhem mi-Kol ‘Ammo*, 357.
75. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 105–6, 182.
76. Ibid., 222. Of relevance are pp. 335, 357.

77. Ibid., 426. On a Jew who explicitly viewed Iran, not Israel, as her own country, see Sarshar, "In Exile at Home," 128–29.
78. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 227n13.
79. Conversation with Mr. Mansur Ostad, Long Island, New York, November 2, 2009.
80. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 236–37. On the game and other rumors, Houchang Chehabi, "A Political History of Football in Iran" *Iranian Studies*, no. 35 (2002): 385. Also, idem, "Jews and Sport in Modern Iran," in *The History of Contemporary Iranian Jews*, ed. H. Sarshar and H. Sarshar (Beverly Hills, CA: Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History, 2000), 4:16–20. On a Muslim calling on her Jewish friend to return to her "own country" of Israel, see Sarshar, "In Exile at Home," 128.
81. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 76–77. Of relevance are I. Farhumand, "Iraniyan-e Yahudi va Hezb-e Tudeh-ye Iran," in *The History of Contemporary Iranian Jews*, ed. H. Sarshar and H. Sarshar (Beverly Hills, CA: Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History, 2000), 4:107–34; Levi, *Khaterat*, 147, 168; S. Daghighian, "Political Life: Jewish Iranian Intellectuals in Twentieth-Century Iran," in *Esther's Children*, ed. H. Sarshar (Beverly Hills, CA: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 265–68; Kermanshachi, *Tahavvolat*, 306–8, 379–80; Ysehaqov, *Megamot*, 105, 111–18.
82. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 74; Ezri, *Mi Bakhem mi-Kol 'Ammo*, 38.
83. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 199. Of relevance seems to be p. 189.
84. J. Pirnazar, "Yahudiyan-e Iran; Hoviyat-e Melli va Ruznamehnegari," in *The History of Contemporary Iranian Jews*, ed. H. Sarshar and H. Sarshar (Beverly Hills, CA: Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History, 2000), 4:25–26. A. Netzer, "Ha-'Itonut ha-Yehudit," in *Qehilot Israel ba-Mizrah ba-Meot ha-Tsha' 'Esreh ve-ha-'Esrin; Iran*, ed. H. Saadoun (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, Hebrew University, and the Ministry of Education and Culture, 2005), 141, 153–56.
85. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 73. Of some relevance is p. 70.
86. Ibid., 114. A case of conversion, apparently in an attempt to inherit a relative's fortune: Goldin, *Wedding Song*, 106.
87. Shofet, *Khaterat*, 90–92; Kermanshachi, *Tahavvolat*, 304–6, 376. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 477, on conversions to or interest in the Baha'i faith in Hamadan. Ibid., 497, on a Jew in Kermanshah that "once tried to be Muslim, and once a Baha'i." See also Amnon Netzer, "Conversion of Iranian Jews to the Baha'i Faith: Early Period," in *Irano-Judaica VI*, ed. Shaul Shaked and Amnon Netzer (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 2008) and Mehrdad Amanat, *Jewish Identities in Iran: Resistance and Conversion to Islam and the Baha'i Faith* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2010).
88. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 476, on a case of a person who converted to Christianity but whose heart "remained Jewish and Zionist."
89. Ibid., 79. On these small communities: ibid., 253, 318, 334, 357, 462–63, 509–10, 522.
90. Ibid., 32, providing Dr. H. Levi's assertion in 1942 that "the connections [of Iran's Jews] with the values of Judaism" are "loosening." Ibid., 253, quoting a report from 1971 speaking of the community's "distancing from the values of the Jewish tradition." Ibid., 523, on "signs of assimilation." Ibid., 411, on what was seen in 1973 as the "great ignorance in Jewish consciousness" among the Jews. Ibid., 422, speaking in 1978 of a "growing assimilation and distancing from the Jewish religion and tradition."
91. Ibid., 22, 87–88, 243 (with an exception), 254.
92. Ibid., 237.
93. Ibid., 284–85, with examples from the educational sphere: Jews who would be less interested to devote time to the learning of Judaism and Hebrew.
94. Ibid., 367, 415. On a Jew who had a non-Jewish lover, see p. 369. On attempts to combat intermarriage already in 1947 and later in 1963, see Levi, *Khaterat*, 158, 167–68. On intermarriage in the years preceding the 1979 revolution, see Levi, *Khaterat*, 182. For a specific case that did not materialize, Hakakian, *Journey*, 49–66. For a case

- of intermarriage, but without forfeiting one's Jewish communal affiliation, see Ezri, *Mi Bakhem mi-Kol 'Ammo*, 359. Of relevance is A. Netzer, "Yehudey Iran be-Yameynu" (Jerusalem: Daf-Hen, 1981), 33–35.
95. Sadok, *Yahadut*, 454–55. It is not always clear whether conversion to Islam was exercised in cases of intermarriage.
 96. *Ibid.*, 455. The Muslim wife eventually converted to Judaism and immigrated with the family to Israel. On possible misgivings from intermarriage, see p. 460.
 97. *Ibid.*, 461.
 98. *Ibid.*, 85.
 99. *Ibid.*, 86.
 100. *Ibid.*, 87.
 101. *Ibid.*, 88. For instance, pp. 423, 427. Goldin, *Wedding Song*, 165. On hatred toward the Jews in the 1960s–1970s, see pp. 43, 158, 189–90, 193, 195.
 102. Hakakian, *Journey*, 6, 179–81.
 103. Netzer, "Yehudey Iran be-Yameynu," 21–26.
 104. C. London, *Far From Zion* (New York: William Morrow, 2009), 218. For a more or less similar answer, but from the religious president of the Jewish community of Shiraz as well as from a board member of the Jewish Sapir Hospital, see p. 217.
 105. The quotes here and below are from: *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, trans. Hamid Algar, at <http://www.leftjustified.com/leftjust/lib/sc/ht/wtp/iran.html>.
 106. "DateLine," Australian television show, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2Skmj8q0Wg&feature=related>. Also, London, *Far From Zion*, 221.
 107. London, *Far From Zion*, 217.
 108. Y. Kohen, *Yousef Kohen; Gozaresh va-Khaterat* (Emrica: Bonyad-i Yousef Kohen, 1993), 14–15. Interestingly, in September–October 1977 he stated that "if I forget you my [Jewish] *qowm* (people, nation, tribe) may my right hand forget me," as on p. 1.
 109. "DateLine," Australian television show, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PbkmHf3jZUo>.
 110. "DateLine," Australian television show, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2Skmj8q0Wg&feature=related>. Elsewhere, Mo'tamed speaks of his "devotion to the Jewish faith," see London, *Far From Zion*, 209.
 111. London, *Far From Zion*, 221.
 112. "DateLine," Australian television show, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2Skmj8q0Wg&feature=related>.
 113. London, *Far From Zion*, 213.
 114. *Ibid.*, 217.
 115. *Ibid.*, 219.
 116. Quoted in F. Goldin Dayanim, "Introduction," *Nashim*, no. 18 (2009): 11.
 117. The Reform, Conservative, and certain types of the Orthodox options of Judaism are relatively new to the Jews of Iranian origins.
 118. For example, the very interest of Jews of Iranian origin in the Reform, Conservative, and certain types of the Orthodox movements can be seen as indicative of their integration on a certain level into American Jewish society.
 119. Writing in Los Angeles, Hakham Shofet (*Khaterat*, 364) preaches not to marry non-Jews.
 120. R. Farahani, *Jews of Iran*, film (2005).
 121. E. Eshaqyan, *Hamrah ba Farhang* (Los Angeles, CA: Sina, 2008), 426. Of relevance is p. 425.
 122. *Ibid.*, 441.
 123. *Ibid.*, 442.
 124. Y. Sharifi, *Dard-e Ahl-e Zemmeh* (Los Angeles, CA: Ketab, 2009), 11.
 125. *Ibid.*, 12.

126. Levi, *Khaterat*, 201. Indeed, Dr. Levi's statement does not necessarily indicate that he is denying his Iranian cultural identity, although he is affirming his Jewish national and religious identity. Of some relevance is that some Mashhadi Jews residing in the United States speak of "the vital importance of a strong and secure Jewish State as a pillar of Jewish identity." See R. Davoodzadeh, "Message of Solidarity," *Megillah*, no. 81 (January 2004): 36.
127. For the American case, L. Baer, "Bridging Cultures: Being Iranian Jewish, Becoming Iranian Jewish American," a paper presented at the Association for Jewish Studies 40th Annual Conference, Washington, DC, December 21–23, 2008; S. Soomekh, "JAPS: Jewish American Persian Women and Their Hybrid Identity in America," a paper presented at the Association for Jewish Studies 41st Annual Conference, Los Angeles, CA, December 20–22, 2009. See also the same title by S. Soomekh, *AJS Perspectives* (Fall 2010), 34–36. I am grateful to L. R. Baer and S. Soomekh for kindly sending me their papers.
128. As indicated in its website, <http://www.30yearsafter.org/>.
129. <http://www.30yearsafter.org/get-involved.asp>.
130. Cf. "Young Iranian Jews Now Pushing Beyond Old Boundaries," *The Jewish Week*, January 29, 2010, 1, 12–13 (also at http://www.thejewishweek.com/viewArticle/c36_a17782/News/New_York.html), where one board member of the 30 Years After group asserts that "we are feeling the same struggle of balancing two cultures in forming our identity as our parents did." A joint statement of the New York chapter's board speaks of its members being "first-generation Iranian American Jews" who are "divided between our dual identities." P. Yousefzadeh, "Personal Revolution," *Tablet*, December 13, 2010, at <http://www.tabletmag.com/news-and-politics/53050/personal-revolution/>, writes that he is "an Iranian-American Jew," and that his "identity means that in addition to being intensely interested in what goes on in the United States," he is "also intensely interested in what goes on in both Israel and Iran." Later on, he mentions his [Jewish] "religious identity." Finally, according to him, the life of an Iranian-American Jew entails a "sense of exile" from his or her "home" of Iran.
131. J. Goldstein, "Iranian Ethnicity in Israel: The Performance of Identity," in *Studies in Israeli Ethnicity*, ed., A. Weingrod (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1985), 238 speaks of "recent emergence of ethnic group consciousness among Iranians in Israel."
132. N. Tefilin-Menashri and M. Bahir, *Ve-Ahavti le-Re'ay Kamoni* (Tel-Aviv: Atid Bahir, 2005), 19. She devotes a section to Persian recipes on pp. 321–31.
133. *Ibid.*, 205.
134. *Ibid.*, 310, 318.
135. *Ibid.*, 310. *Ibid.*, 311 goes on to depict the Jew Nay-Davud who "returned the Iranian music its lost honor."
136. *Ibid.*, 313.
137. *Ibid.*, 310–16.
138. *Ibid.*, 317. See also D. Menashri, "Reflections on the Immigration of Iranian Jews to Israel," in *The History of Contemporary Iranian Jews*, ed. H. Sarshar and H. Sarshar (Beverly Hills, CA: Center for Iranian Jewish Oral History, 1997), 2:15.
139. Tefilin-Menashri, *Ve-Ahavti*, 315.
140. *Ibid.*, 317.
141. *Ibid.*
142. Yehoshua, *Dyuqanah*, 29.
143. For example, Yehoshua, *Dyuqanah*, 46. Evidence for this custom as late as 2007 in H. Nissimi, "Individual Redemption and Family Commitment: The Influence of Mass Immigration to Israel on the Crypto-Jewish Women of Mashhad," *Nashim*, no. 18 (2009): 51.
144. Yehoshua, *Dyuqanah*, 49–50.

145. Ibid., 50–51.
146. Elaboration on identity/ies of Mashhad Jews in H. Nissimi, *The Crypto-Jewish Mashhadis* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2007), 106–19. Some members of some other communities seem to remember their specific place of origin in Iran, as seen in their organizations (e.g., The Organization of the Jews of Shiraz in Israel; on the Shiraz Jew in Shiraz who views himself “superior to the Jews of the north,” Loeb, *Outcaste*, 174). Of relevance is Goldstein, “Iranian Ethnicity in Israel,” 243.
147. Moreh, *Yedey Eliyahu*, 3.
148. Shofet, *Khaterat*, 14.

THE CONFESSIONS OF DOLGORUKI

THE CRISIS OF IDENTITY AND THE CREATION OF A MASTER NARRATIVE

MINA YAZDANI

IN HIS DISCUSSION OF THE “TENUOUS” RELATIONSHIP between historiography and literature, Hayden White mentions that, while historiography arises against a background of “literary” discourse, it shares with it the “systems of meaning-production (the modes of emplotment).” It is by virtue of its subject matter (“real” rather than “imaginary” events) that historiography differentiates itself from literature.¹ White would perhaps be intrigued to learn that a work of fiction, masquerading as historiography, in time created a long-lasting master narrative. *The Confessions of Dolgoruki* was a narrative that appeared in 1930s Iran, purporting to be the memoirs or political confessions of Dimitriy Ivanovich Dolgorukov (d. 1867), the Russian minister in Iran from 1845 to 1854.² According to these Confessions, in the 1830s, Dolgoruki, who had been commissioned as translator to the Russian embassy, came to Iran with a secret mission. He subsequently converted to Islam, studied under a certain Hakim Ahmad Gilani and donned the clerics’ garments. He employed a number of people as spies, among them Mirza Hosayn ‘Ali, the future founder of the Baha’i religion. After returning to Russia, he set off for the ‘*Atabat*’ (the Shi’i shrine cities of Iraq) under the alias Shaykh ‘Isa Lankarani. Upon arriving in the ‘*Atabat*, he persuaded a young seminary student from Shiraz to return to Iran and launch the Babi movement. He subsequently returned to Iran himself as the Russian ambassador and began to bring about the appearance of the Baha’i religion by giving instructions to Mirza Hosayn ‘Ali. The goal of each of these measures was to destroy the national unity that Islam had created among Iranians in order to serve the interests of his own country.³

The Confessions is a very complex text. Like a mirror, it reflected the hegemonic sociopolitical discourses contemporaneous with its invention, later publication

and frequent redactions. In the earliest manuscripts, it looks to the pivotal issue of Islamic unity from a Sunni perspective. In later editions, this perspective is subject to a Shi'i twist. It is pro-Islam yet anticlerical. It promotes Aryan nationalism yet its main concern is the unity of the Muslim world. This chapter will explore the ways in which *The Confessions* reflected an identity crisis in post-Constitutional-era Iran. By Othering Baha'is, *The Confessions* fused two inconsonant Aryan and Islamic modes of national identity. Despite its far-fetched plot, countless textual discrepancies, and numerous testimonies dismissing its authenticity, the text constructed a master narrative that marginalized historical facts and realities.

HISTORY: HOW *THE CONFESSIONS* EMERGED AND ITS DIFFERENT EDITIONS

The Confessions first appeared in Mashhad and Tehran as a handwritten text in the mid-1930s.⁴ It was composed in the form of a luck chain letter (*zanjir-e khosh-bakhi*) that encouraged readers to transcribe and send copies to new people with promises of being protected from an impending calamity.⁵ Apparently, it was first published in AH 1322/1943 in a number of newspapers⁶ and perhaps in the same year in a book titled *Eslam va mahdaviyat*.⁷ Sayyed Mohammad Baqer Hejazi, the author of the latter work, claimed that *The Confessions* had been published in AH 1314/1935, by "one of the men of Iran (*yeki az rejal-e Iran*)" and admitted that he himself then had "redacted" it to publish it in *Eslam va mahdaviyat*.⁸ The next edition appeared in Mashhad in the history section of *Salnameh-ye Khorasan* at the end of AH 1322/1943.⁹ Soon after, it was published independently in Tehran¹⁰ and reprinted numerous times thereafter.¹¹ The original chain letter, which is the oldest version of the text, was published in AH 1342/1963 in Hasan E'zam Qodsi's *Khaterat-e man ya tarikh-e sad saleh-ye Iran*.¹²

The numerous textual differences among the first editions and likewise between these and later editions, point to a continuous history of redactions. The E'zam Qodsi, Hejazi, and *Salnameh-ye Khorasan* versions have several key discrepancies. Some of these differences point to the difficulties of reading handwritten copies. This suggests that these editions are independent of one another and each has been written from a separate handwritten text. However, the differences between the various editions go beyond this and at times demonstrate clearly the "corrections" that have made and the discretionary interpolations that have occurred. One of the most salient discrepancies, with serious implications for understanding the religio-intellectual trend from which *The Confessions* appeared, deserves special attention. Earlier versions, in the E'zam and Hejazi editions, present a Sunni perspective concerning the issue the Prophet's successor: "Before passing," Mohammad commanded the "consensus of the ummah" to be the basis for selecting the leader of the community.¹³ In the *Salnameh-ye Khorasan* edition, this point has been ever so carefully changed to state that, after the passing of Muhammad, 'Ali accepted the "consensus of the ummah"—not that this form of appointing the caliph was the instruction of Muhammad himself.¹⁴ In other words, the text has been altered to reflect a position reconcilable with the mainstream Shi'i position on the issue of Muhammad's successor. In the Tehran edition, numerous phrases were altered to amend the discrepancies. The most noticeable of these is the change in expression concerning Muhammad's successor, which now assumes a completely Shi'i position

and perspective: Before his passing, Mohammad appointed 'Ali as his successor.¹⁵ However, in order to prevent the emergence of discord between the believers, 'Ali chose to relinquish his right (to Abu Bakr).

This editing, which with occasional minimal changes became the standard version of *The Confessions*, is the one that will be cited here. In addition to the discrepancies between the various editions, the work also contains internal inconsistencies, contradictions, and historical errors. A discussion of these errors and internal tensions is beyond the scope of the present study.¹⁶ It suffices here to say that the errors and incongruities included those related to the life of the real Dolgoruki and the life of the founders of Babi and Baha'i religions.

THE SPECTRUM OF RESPONSES

REACTION FROM THE BAHAI COMMUNITY

In AH 1324/1946, the national governing body of Iran's Baha'i community published an eighty-two-page mimeographed booklet for limited distribution among Bahai's (as there were no means to distribute it more broadly).¹⁷ Seeking to prove the fraudulence of *The Confessions*, the booklet spelled out the internal conflicts and incoherencies found in the text. Its authors highlighted its discrepancies with the life of the real Dimitry Ivanovich Dolgoruki¹⁸ on the one hand, and those of the Babi-Baha'i figures and historical events on the other. They then asked the single most important question: Where is the original document that *The Confessions* claims to be a translation of?¹⁹ And why is there no mention of this document in the work of Orientalists who have studied Babi-Baha'i history?²⁰ In 1966, the Baha'i journal, *World Order*, published an English translation of excerpts from the original dispatches of Dolgoruki that indicate both a delayed awareness and clear antagonism on the part of the Russian diplomat toward the movement of the Bab in its earlier stages when his sole source of information was the government. "As the representative of one autocrat at the court of another," *World Order* said, Dolgoruki "sympathized with the attempts of the Shah to . . . prevent the spread of the ideas which might threaten the established order." Later on, he became acquainted with a number of Babis, and his knowledge of the movement increased.²¹ Although the editors of the journal *World Order* did not refer to *The Confessions* at all, the publication of the original dispatches in *World Order* proved once and for all that *The Confessions* were a forgery. In order to counter a resurgence in anti-Baha'i rhetoric that once again appealed to *The Confessions* to accuse Baha'is of espionage for foreign powers, Baha'is outside Iran published a number of other articles in recent years, reasserting that the text is a forgery.²²

SCHOLARS

The confessions generated the most divergent responses imaginable. Several scholars have completely rejected their authenticity. In AH 1322/1943, Ahmad Kasravi said that the work mythologized Dolgoruki into a "Husayn-Kurd Shabastari"-type character.²³ He went on to argue "Without any doubt, this work has been forged."²⁴ In AH 1328/1949, 'Abbas Eqbal-Ashtiyani introduced it as something "completely fabricated . . . a work of several impostors . . . filled with ridiculous

historical errors.”²⁵ In the AH 1330s/1950s, individuals such as Mahmud Mahmud and Sayyed Hasan Taqizadeh registered their views as to its fabrication.²⁶ In AH 1342/1963, Mojtaba Minuvi referred to it as “a sham” containing “historical incongruities and (so-called) facts that contradict historical reality.”²⁷ In 1984, during the course of an address at the Thirty-first International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa, Iranian scholar Amin Banani, speaking of the persecution of the Baha'is in Iran, noted the influence *The Confessions*—despite the mountain of evidence against its authenticity—had exerted on how even Iranian intellectuals perceive the Baha'is.²⁸ In AH 1371/1999 the British scholar, Denis MacEoin wrote that *The Confessions* was “nothing but a clumsy forgery.”²⁹ In AH 1374/1955, Ahmad Ashraf wrote about the profound impact of these “forged memoirs” on “the minds of (Iranian) readers.”³⁰ Finally, in AH 1379–80/2001, Mohammed Tavakoli-Targhi interpreted these “forgeries” as the embodiment of “feelings of inferiority among Iranians vis-à-vis foreign powers.”³¹

Some have vacillated between remaining silent about the work and voicing their rejection of it. Fereydoun Adamiyat, who in AH 1323/1944 invented a narrative similar to *The Confessions* but credited the British and not the Russians for creating the Babi movement,³² was initially reticent to comment on *The Confessions*. Later he would assert, “This story does not even possess the wit of a children’s tale. It is a cock-and-bull story—dreamt up by fanatical minds who are far too taken with fairy tales . . . It has no historical credibility whatsoever.”³³ Similarly, in the early AH 1380s/2000s, Abdollah Shahbazi was silent regarding *The Confessions* when writing his own equally conspiratorial British-Zionist version of Babi-Baha’i history;³⁴ however, he would later refer to *The Confessions* as a forgery.³⁵

On the other side of the spectrum were those who treated *The Confessions* as a reliable historical source. This started even before the publication of *The Confessions*. The editors of volume 1 of Hashem Mohitmafi’s *Moqaddamat-e mashrutiyat* indicate that Mohitmafi appended a copy of *The Confessions of Dolgoruki* to his manuscript. The editors did not include that copy (and a number of other addenda found in Mohitmafi’s manuscript) because they “had been published frequently in various history books.”³⁶ Mohitmafi’s appending *The Confessions* is important for two reasons. First, because he died in AH 1321/1942–43, his inclusion of *The Confessions* predates its first publication. Second, Mohitmafi incorporated *The Confessions* as the real history of the life of Baha’ullah, the founder of the Baha’i religion in his book. As such, Mohitmafi is perhaps the first author to cite *The Confessions* as a work of history. What makes his case more interesting is that he refers to the movement of the Bab as a “religious revolution (*enghelab-e diyanati*)” and one of the “three great revolutions of the past century,” the other two being “the political revolution, culminating in Constitutionalism,” and “the military revolution, the 1299 coup.”³⁷ Furthermore, he chose to only cite the parts of *The Confessions* that mention Baha’ullah and completely ignored the sections dealing with the Bab.³⁸ These points, considered with what the author has written on the Baha’i-Azali dispute, suggest that he was likely an Azali. His work, however, was published in AH 1363/1984, many years after his death.

Just a few years after the printing of *The Confessions*, in an anti-Baha’i work published in AH 1325/1946, the author Abu Torab Hoda’i referred readers interested in the history of the Baha’i faith to *The Confessions*.³⁹ In the same year, Ayatollah Kashani, in a separate polemical work written on the basis of *The Confessions*, wrote

an introduction in support of it.⁴⁰ In AH 1331/1952, Hojjat al-Islam Haj Shaykh Hosayn Khorasani recapped the details of *The Confessions* in the introduction of his work.⁴¹ In AH 1339/1960 'Ali Davani extended the influence of *The Confessions* to the realm of Shi'i theological discourse and in the midst of the discussion of a *hadith* made a reference to the emergence of the Bab being instigated by the Russian consul.⁴² In AH 1344/1965, Morteza Ahmad A. claimed to have discovered "extensive statements in the books of the (Baha'i) sect" that "support the contents of *The Confessions*."⁴³ In AH 1345/1966, Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani called attention to "the many signs of truth and validity" found "throughout *The Confessions*."⁴⁴ The mid-1340s/1960s witnessed an interesting twist: While arguing in support of a Russian connection to the movement of the Bab, in AH 1345/1966 Morteza Modarresi-Chahardahi published the Persian translation of the dispatches of the real Dolgoruki—the English translation of which had been published earlier that year by Baha'is in *World Order*, in effect proving that *The Confessions* was a forgery. Here we see a classical example of how "arguments against a conspiracy are quickly transformed into arguments for a conspiracy."⁴⁵ In AH 1350s/1970s, Mohammad Baqer Najafi and later, in the AH 1360s/1980s, Bahram Afrasiyabi, while not explicitly mentioning *The Confessions*, endorsed and propagated the impressions that *The Confessions* had created.⁴⁶ In AH 1362/1983, 'Emad al-Din Baqi invoked *The Confessions* as the legitimate history of the Baha'is.⁴⁷ In AH 1368/1989, a group of supporters of the Pahlavi monarchy outside Iran published *The Confessions* in their newspaper, *Shahfaraz-e Aryan*.⁴⁸ In AH 1380/2001, the university professor, Zahed Zahedani left open the possibility of "recognizing this report as a historical document,"⁴⁹ and in recent years, anti-Baha'i polemics have repeatedly introduced the work as a legitimate, historically sound primary source. A new development occurred in AH 1386/2007. Hojjat al-Islam Hajj Hasani asserted that Baha'is were trying to "pretend" that *The Confessions* was fraudulent. In order to prove the authenticity of the text, he even identified a translator for it: a person who used to work at the Russian embassy in Tehran at the time. Furthermore, he presented "historical evidence," for "the existence" of Shaykh Mohammad the teacher and father-in-law of the Dolgoruki of *The Confessions*; a posthumous oral statement attributed to Ayatollah Lankarani was produced describing his encounter in his father's class with an old man who knew Shaykh Mohammad well.⁵⁰

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE AUTHOR'S WELTANSCHAUUNG

Despite the frequent and at times contradictory changes in the various editions of *The Confessions*, it is still possible to map out key elements in the thought of its author(s). In addition to a dominant anti-Baha'ism, three distinctive features characterize the overall character of *The Confessions*: first, a nationalist, racist attitude; second, a fundamental concern with Islamic unity and rapprochement (*taqrib*) between Sunnis and Shi'is; and finally, an anticlerical posture.

For the most part, these three elements are found expressed in responses offered by Hakim Ahmad Gilani to questions posed by the narrator concerning why Iran, "with all its grandeur" was defeated by "the Greek, the Arabs, and Mongols"? Why Islam has been divided into different sects and factions? And which of these factions is the "right" one?⁵¹ Hakim's reply to the nostalgic question of how Iran lost the glories of a bygone age reflects an Aryanist conception of Iranian history: a purist,

exclusivist worldview. He ascribes the “weakness” of Iran to the influence of “the stranger and the foreign nations” (*ajnabi va melal-e khareji*); describes “the Jews and Mazdakis” as agents creating schism among Iranians; adds that these two elements and “the influence of Christianity from the West” weakened the country; and concludes his diatribe with the words, “This is how a group of Arabs, obedient to the command of God, defeated such a great nation.”⁵² The incongruence between the contempt-filled reference to “a group of Arabs” and the respectful mention of “in obedience to the command of God” reflects an internal tension in *The Confessions* between two conflicting identities: one nationalist and the other Islamist. The nationalist attitude presents itself at another point in the author’s praise of the “Aryan race” as “extremely high-minded, patriotic, and intelligent.”⁵³

The cultivation and promotion of Islamic unity is a central concern of *The Confessions* and remains a consistent thread throughout the redaction process—from earlier editions that endorse the Sunni view of Mohammad’s successor to later editions that are more in line with the Shi’i perspective. The consistent message throughout is that “Islam does not have different factions (*sho’abat nadarad*). Islam means to believe in God and the Qur’an.”⁵⁴ It has [only] one (set of) principles (*yek osul darad*).⁵⁵ The reader of *The Confessions* is told that at the time of the first four Caliphs, “there were no wars and conflicts” (*hich jang va neza’i [nabud]*).⁵⁶ The concern for rapprochement (*taqrib*) between Sunnis and Shi’is is also demonstrated in the fact that the founders of the four Sunni legal schools are counted on par with the founder of the Shi’i legal school, Ja’far al-Sadiq.⁵⁷ This emphasis on Islamic unity is, of course, called for in order to protect “Islam” from “foreign governments” [*dawlatha-ye digar*] in later editions⁵⁸ and from “Russia” in earlier editions.⁵⁹

The third element in the thought of the author is a strong anticlerical stance, despite his passion for Islam. Quoting Hakim Gilani, he writes that true Islam (*hanifeh-ye haqqeh*) brought unity among Muslims, but “the ambitious and selfish leaders” created schism.⁶⁰ When Dolgoruki is disguised as a *mullah*, he describes himself as having become “distrustful” of anything new before adding that he “considers any scientific progress for Iran as blasphemy (*kofr*) like a cleric (*mesl-e yek akhund*).”⁶¹ Elsewhere he writes, “So and so donkey-mounted cleric has gathered thousands of naive people around him and is in charge in Iran . . . So and so ignorant mullah is conning the people. Sometimes crying and wailing, sometimes lamenting and weeping, and sometimes gathering people together and recounting the sufferings of the Imams, he solicits money from the unfortunate masses and calls upon the people to worship him.”⁶² This anticlericalism is clearly stronger in the earlier versions; the successive redactions gradually changed the anticlerical text to a text antagonistic to irreligion. In the earlier versions criticism is registered against “the weakness of the faith of religious leaders” (*sosti-ye ‘aqideh-ye bozorgan-e din*).⁶³ This is changed in the *Salnameh Khorasan* version to “the weakness of the faith of leaders” (*sosti-ye ‘aqideh-ye bozorgan*),⁶⁴ before being given a sudden, abrupt twist in the Tehran “final” edition to “the weakness of the faith of the *irreligious* leaders” (*susti-ye ‘aqideh-ye bozorgan-e bi-din*)!⁶⁵ In sharp contrast to the nationalistic, racist tendencies of the text, this anticlericalism is accompanied by a contempt-filled view of Iranians as “the vulgar” (*mardom-e ‘avam*) who “cannot recognize right from wrong.”⁶⁶

HEGEMONIC SOCIOPOLITICAL DISCOURSES OF THE TIME

An apprehension of and preoccupation with contemporary Europeans and the threats of imperialism characterized the hegemonic sociopolitical discourses in the decades that immediately followed the Iranian Constitutional Revolution. Having left behind what has been referred to as “one hundred years of contempt,” Iranians were now obsessively concerned with dignifying Iran. Nationalism was “the response to the emotional need of the patriots.”⁶⁷ Next to the more recent memories of the infringements and interventions of the imperialist powers was the memory of the more distant “defeat” at the hands of Arabs, “the destroyers of Iran’s ancient grandeur.” In response to this defeat and in an effort to console “their sense of inferiority in comparison with contemporary Europeans,” the foundational concern of the “nostalgic nationalists” of the time became “the recovery of [Iran’s] ancient grandeur and purity.” In their “intense desire to forget via a creative remembrance of a remote past . . . they sought to create an *archaeotopia* (archaeo + topia), an archaic and archeologically informed Aryan past.”⁶⁸

The imperialist threat evoked a different response in some of the religiously minded Iranian Muslims: a longing for a return to a different past. These reformist Muslims sought to revive a pristine form of Islam in order to counter the dominance of imperial hegemony over Iran in particular and the Islamic world as a whole. Following the lead of their late nineteenth-century predecessors, the most prominent of whom was Sayyed Jamal al-Din Afghani, these reformist theologians have usually been referred to as “Salafi.”⁶⁹ Particularly concerned with saving of the Islamic world from what they regarded as its state of “decline” (*enbetat*) and the dominance of imperialism, these “Salafi” theologians promoted the unity of all Muslims—a condition they believed prevailed in the first forty years of Islamic history. In their idealization of those forty years, they tended to disregard the Shi’i-Sunni conflict over the issue of the prophet Mohammad’s successor and were inclined in their political theory toward a Sunni approach as opposed to a Shi’i one, believing in the legitimacy of an elective system of leadership.⁷⁰ They also looked upon the clerical establishment with disdain, despite coming from the ranks of the clergy themselves.

It was in the midst of these two different approaches, each informing a different mode of identity that *The Confessions* appeared. Its appearance was preceded by a number of phenomena that paved the way for its creation.

THE LITERARY AND SOCIOHISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE CONFESSIONS OF DOLGORUKI

THE LITERARY CONTEXT

The Confessions of Dolgoruki were created and circulated for some years as the handwritten Luck Chain letter in mid-1930s. It can be said that in a social milieu already filled with religiously motivated anti-Baha’ism, three texts, each representing a certain mode of thought, provided the context for the creation of *The Confessions of Dolgoruki*. The first two were both forgeries and fully conspiratorial: *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, representing religious prejudice, and the *Testament of Peter the Great*, representing Russophobia. The third was *Siyasat-e Talebi*, consisting of

an imaginary conversation represented an apprehension and preoccupation with imperialist encroachments on Iran.

The first text, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was a modern literary fake appearing at the turn of the century in prerevolutionary Russia, purporting to plan Jewish domination of the globe.⁷¹ The text was translated into many European languages as well as Arabic (in 1920) and was therefore known by many learned Iranians of the time.⁷² The author(s) of *The Confessions* were doubtless well aware of *The Protocols*. Given that the news of the anti-Jewish events going on in Europe had reached Iran, and that, as attested by the text of *The Confessions*, anti-Baha'ism was concomitant with anti-Judaism in the author's(s') mind(s), it is unsurprising that *The Confessions* was inspired by *The Protocols*, a process that is likely to have come about naturally.⁷³

Next was *The Testament of Peter the Great*, the late eighteenth-century text according to which Russia had secretly designed to subjugate Europe and "conquer Persia and thereby reach the southern warm waters."⁷⁴ An intensified Russophobia among Iranians (partly a reaction to Russia's encroachments on Iran during and after the Constitutional Revolution) was the cause of the attention paid to this Russophobic forgery.⁷⁵ The link between the alleged design and *The Confessions of Dolgoruki* in the minds of those who propagated it was such that Sayyed Mohammad Baqir Hejazi, who "redacted" and published *The Confessions* in his *Islam va mahdaviyat*,⁷⁶ wrote that the sending of Dolgoruki to the 'Atabat, as appears in *The Confessions*, was part of the Romanovs' attempt to fulfill the testament of Peter the Great.⁷⁷ Morteza Ahmad A., an earnest advocate of the authenticity of *The Confessions*, likewise believed Russia created the Baha'i religion through Dolgoruki in order "to reach southern warm waters."⁷⁸

The third text represented an apprehension and preoccupation with imperialist encroachments. 'Abd al-Rahim Talebov (d. 1911) was the author of *Siyasat-e Talebi*, a fictional dialogue between a Russian and a British ambassador who devised plans for the neutralization and domination of Iran.⁷⁹ Talebov was also wary that "since the time of the Peter the Great," he had not "seen any of the Russian statesmen who were not determined in the extreme to capture Iran."⁸⁰

It could be argued that *The Confessions* was in part inspired by *Siyasat-e Talebi*. For example, Talebov writes of Nikolai Sergeevich Dolgorukov's significant interference in the internal affairs of Iran, like the "deposition of Zell al-Soltan," as part of his "missions."⁸¹ Likewise, *The Confessions* also gives an account of how Dolgoruki (in this case, Dimitri Ivanovich) instigated Zell al-Soltan upon the death of Fath-'Ali Shah to claim successorship but then "reversed the process" as soon as he received orders from the Russian court to support Mohammad Mirza, a son of the late Shah, in his bid for kingship.⁸²

When confronted with the rejection of the authenticity of *The Confessions* by scholars such as Kasravi, Sayyed Mohammad Baqer Hejazi wrote that "incidentally," he had obtained a copy of *Siyasat-e Talebi* and had seen that it supported the contents of *The Confessions*. He then referred anyone who doubted the validity of *The Confessions* to read *Siyasat-e Talebi*.⁸³ Obviously, Hejazi had confused Talebov's Nikolai Sergeevich Dolgorukov, who was the Russian ambassador in the later years of Naser al-Din Shah's reign, with Dimitriy Ivanovich Dolgorukov, the alleged writer of *The Confessions* and the Russian ambassador during Mohammad Shah's rule.⁸⁴ It can be said that the decision to write *The Confessions* in the name of

Dolgoruki had been informed by the content of *Siyasat-e Talebi* and was not a mere accident, even though they are about two different Dolgoruki's.

Talebov's narrative and the story of Gladstone, who allegedly raised a copy of the Qur'an in his hand in the British Parliament and said that so long as this book remained with the Muslims the British would never dominate them, were widespread among Iranians and fairly popular in the decades following the Constitutional Revolution. Dolgoruki's story was an expression of the same type of apprehension and heightened consciousness regarding imperialist infringements of and encroachments upon Iran.

PUBLICATION: SOCIOPOLITICAL CONTEXT

The Confessions were published in early 1940s, under conditions ripe for the widespread acceptance of an anti-imperialist conspiracy theory.⁸⁵ It was at a time when Iranians were going through the imposed burden and shock of World War II, a time that saw the demise and forced abdication of a monarch whom most believed had been brought to power *and* overthrown by foreign imperialists. The perception that events were going on, orchestrated and manipulated by foreign powers (the invincible external Other), and the suspicion that such events were signs of their heinous ulterior motives toward the Iranian nation, no doubt heightened receptivity toward conspiratorial theories, especially ones concerning traditionally hated minority groups.

Karl R. Popper refers to the conspiracy theory of society as "the typical result of the secularization of religious superstitions," and explains the archaic root of this transformation as such, "the belief in the Homeric gods whose conspiracies were responsible for the vicissitudes of the Trojan War is gone. But the place of the gods on Homer's Olympus is now taken by the Learned Elders of Zion, or by the monopolists, or the capitalists, or the imperialists."⁸⁶ *The Confessions of Dolgoruki* embodies many elements of Popper's discourse. The same transformation is at work here: the secularization of religious prejudice, and the depiction of imperialists as the all-powerful forces behind historical events.

According to Leonidas Donkins, the conspiracy theory, while implicit in archaic consciousness, was elaborated by the Christian demonology, which "provided a general framework within which various popular beliefs in diabolic agencies and sinister forces on earth, on the one hand, and secular forms of the demonization of the Other in general, on the other, came into being."⁸⁷ As such, while taking an Islamist anticolonial position, the author(s) of *The Confessions* was (or were) ironically appealing to a phenomenon with Western Christian origins.

THE CONFESSIONS OF DOLGORUKI AND THE FORMATION OF IRANIAN IDENTITY

Societies typically construct two kinds of Others: an external Other that belongs to a different ethnicity or nation; and an internal Other—that is, the segment of any given society whose race, religion, gender, or social class differs from the majority. A nation usually defines itself against one of the other of these two categories.⁸⁸ In *The Confessions of Dolgoruki*, Baha'is, the despised internal Other, were linked to the Russians, the feared external Other.⁸⁹ The anti-Baha'i sentiments inflamed by

The Confessions are a prime examples of what Abbas Amanat has referred to as, “A doctrinally admissible ritual to forge a sense of collective ‘self’ versus an indigenous ‘other’ at a time when the alien ‘other’ was too intimidating and inaccessible to be viewed as an adversary.”⁹⁰

Achieving this sense of collective “self” demands special attention here. In *The Confessions of Dolgoruki*, two inconsonant modes of self-identity exist side by side: a religion-based identity with Islam as its core and a race-based nationalist identity that was strongly anti-Arab. Casting Baha'is as the Other of both these elements served to “solve” the conflict and integrate these two modes. Baha'is were already the religious Other. Casting them in conspiratorial connection with imperialism would make them the traitors of the nation as well. The two conflicting identities could now unite against a common “enemy.” *The Confessions of Dolgoruki* fused two inconsonant Aryan and Islamic modes national identities.⁹¹

Alternatively, one can argue that although the *The Confessions* champion racial nationalism, the work appeals to what can be called “religious nationalism” for its Othering and ultimate demonization of Baha'is. In its narrative, Baha'is are the tools of foreign imperialism bent on disrupting the national unity achieved by Islam. Therefore, defeating and eradicating this internal Other becomes crucial for preserving the Iranian (Islamist) identity. This is in line with what Partha Chatterjee refers to as the insistence of ‘religious nationalism’ on a single majority-based source of identity.⁹²

While the “Salafi” predecessors of the creator(s) of *The Confessions of Dolgoruki* were motivated by anticolonialism (i.e., dealing with the external Other), *The Confessions* conjoined this external Other with the internal Other, targeting it with all the hatred and suspicion directed toward the colonial powers.⁹³ A close reading of the works of the leading “Salafi” theologians of the period under consideration facilitates our ability to understand the linkage between Baha'is as the internal Other and colonial powers as the external Other of a Muslim nation. For Asadollah Kharqani (d. AH 1315/1936), the most prominent of such thinkers, the formation of a united Islamic front, like that which in his mind existed in the first forty years of the religion's history, was a vital component of strengthening Muslims in their battle against its multiple Others, namely, “*ajaneb*”⁹⁴ (foreigners) and “the followers of old religions, new religions, materialists and naturalists.”⁹⁵ These forces together made up an axis of waywardness and unbelief (*kofr*)⁹⁶ that was marshalled against the forces of Islam. Embodying the dominant worldview of the Iranian Islamists of his time, Kharqani categorized all Muslim sects (*feraq*) into one group and all the different Others in an antipodal other. This division is an example of what Laclau refers to as the logic of equivalence; constructing a chain of “equivalential” identities among different elements that are seen as expressing a certain sameness⁹⁷—in this case, “enmity toward Islam.” As such, Kharqani's association of new religious movements working in unison with foreign powers to confront and ultimately destroy Islam can be regarded as the prelude to an attitude that crystallized in *The Confessions*—one that cast Baha'is as the internal Other consorting with the external Other in a grand conspiracy.

The Confessions thus called for and successfully promoted the notion of an exclusionary nation that achieved its “unity” through singling out a minority it considered “unabsorbable” by depicting it as a cultural and political fifth column.⁹⁸

**WHO WAS THE CREATOR OF *THE CONFESSIONS*? SOME
NOTES ON WELTANSCHAUUNG AND INTERTEXTUALITY**

Considering the *zeitgeist* of the period that witnessed the appearance of *The Confessions of Dolgoruki*, it is not difficult to argue that the text was a child of its time. A careful reading of *The Confessions* leaves one with the sense that its author was a “Salafi” thinker. Four pieces of internal textual evidence can be cited as governing this impression: a reading of the early history of Islam consistent with the “Sunni” version in earlier unredacted editions of the text; confidence that Islamic unity is the most effective means to combat western imperialism; belief that the first forty years of Islam constituted a golden age to be emulated; and finally, an aversion to Shi’i clerics. As we saw, the text also embraces elements of racial nationalism—that is, Aryanism. One can therefore infer that the creator of *The Confessions* possessed these rather conflicting characteristics, had the minimum required literary talent to write a story, and was fiercely anti-Baha’i.

Shaykh Ebrahim Zanjani was among the “Salafi” reformists contemporary with the emergence of *The Confessions*. Zanjani was a Constitutionalist and a member of the parliament from Zanjan.⁹⁹ There are striking similarities between Zanjani’s views and the ideas expressed in *The Confession*. There is also clear intertextuality between his writings and *The Confessions*. Furthermore, despite being a clergyman himself, Zanjani was openly critical of Muslim clerics. Last, but certainly not least, he was a novelist and an anti-Baha’i polemicist.

The similarity of his mind-set with that of the author of *The Confessions* is particularly striking vis-à-vis fusing two disparate, if not contradictory modes: puritan racial nationalism and Salafi thought. His writings provide ample evidence for both such tendencies—glorifying the Aryan race on the one hand and striving to revive a pristine form of Islam on the other. The nationalist and anti-Arab views expressed in his, “*Andaki az tarikh-e Iran*” (A Brief Look at the History of Iran) are very similar to the attitudes voiced by “Hakim Ahmad-e Gilani” in *The Confessions*. He complained of the “wild and coarse nature” of the Arabs who dominated Iran, boasted about the “Aryan race of Iranians,” and regretted that “Bedouin Arabs” “ruined the pure Iranian race.”¹⁰⁰ He called for a return to “real” Islam, which he believed advocated an elective process for Muslim leadership.¹⁰¹ He emphasized the urgency of Islamic unity and referred to the Sunni-Shi’i conflict as “*bahth-e bi asar*” (a futile dispute) Muslims had to put aside in order to join together to combat the “enemies of Islam.”¹⁰² Zanjani’s strong anticlerical stance was reminiscent of the earlier editions of *The Confessions*—in both language and content. Even though he himself was once a preacher, he believed that there was no room for clerics in Islam and complained of “a group of turbaned irreligious (men)” who were jealous of and hostile to him.¹⁰³

It is difficult to miss the intertextuality between Zanjani’s *Khaterat* and *The Confessions*. The prose styles are similar, in particular in the decision on the part of both authors to voice their views in the form of a dialogue between two characters.¹⁰⁴ In addition, similar statements are found in the two texts. At one point a proverb is used in the exact same context in both works.¹⁰⁵ At another point, there is a striking resemblance in how the matter of the Muslim clerics’ pejorative use of the label “Babi” is treated in both texts. The narrator of *The Confessions* recalled, “We received the greatest help from the clerics. They would label whoever they

were opposed to as a 'Babi' and we would proceed to attract these [same] people . . . We would secretly persuade the clerics to call whoever we wanted a 'Babi' and an infidel. Then we would immediately bring them into our circle."¹⁰⁶ And Zanjani wrote, "[the clerics] would destroy whoever they were hostile to or whoever criticized them, with this accusation [of being a Babi]."¹⁰⁷

Zanjani was an ardent reader of Western novels. He himself authored a number of novels, some of them belonging to the historical fiction genre in which fantasy and historical reality are weaved as is the case with *The Confessions*.¹⁰⁸ In his autobiography, he writes that he had read the books of "the late Talebov" and encouraged others to do so as well. In the same section where he states that he ordered "new novels from Tehran," he adds that he intended to gradually fight against despotism, tyranny, "the superstitions and deceptions of those pretending [to possess religious] knowledge ('*alem-namayan*)," and "the religious innovations" they have created.¹⁰⁹

That Zanjani was fiercely anti-Baha'i is no secret. He gave an account of his interrogation of the Baha'i teacher, Ali Mohammad Varqa, during the latter's arrest in Zanjan prior to his execution. He considered the occasion a cause of "great fame and glory" for himself.¹¹⁰ Shortly after this episode, he wrote an anti-Baha'i polemic.¹¹¹ His connections with a number of prominent Azalis may have aggravated his anti-Baha'i sentiments.¹¹²

There were a number of other elements in his life and writings that are relevant to our current discussion. Zanjani read newspapers such as *Habl al-Matin*, and was therefore familiar with the anticolonial discourses of his time.¹¹³ There are passages in his *Khaterat* that clearly reflect the Russo-phobia that informed *The Confessions*.¹¹⁴ His knowledge of the physical sciences may also have been reflected in the "scientific" remarks of "Hakim Ahmad Gilani" found in *The Confessions*.¹¹⁵

Another person who attracts attention when thinking of the creation of *The Confessions* is Sayyed Mohammad Bagher Hejazi, who, as was mentioned earlier, redacted and published an early version of *The Confessions*.¹¹⁶ and whose thoughts were in some major aspects similar to the *Weltanschauung* of the author of *The Confessions*. This includes, but is not limited to, his views on the pivotal notion of Islam as the force to resist imperialism and a return to pristine Islam as a means of achieving Islamic unity.¹¹⁷ Hejazi's Sunni-oriented views on early Islamic history were congruent with those expressed in earlier versions of *The Confessions*.¹¹⁸ We also saw his reasoning and insistence on the authenticity of *The Confessions*; however, one major component of the thought of the author of *The Confessions* was lacking in Hejazi: he did not write anything to indicate a serious concern with Aryanism and race-based nationalism—an important feature of *The Confessions*. Furthermore, while he was likewise a fledgling novelist, his prose, unlike that of Zanjani, does not bear much in common with *The Confessions*.¹¹⁹ As we know, Zanjani died in AH 1313/1935—that is, prior to the wide circulation of the luck chain letter, to the extent that we know of the history of the latter. We also know that Hejazi had access to a copy of *The Confessions* as early as AH 1314/1936 according to his own account. Given this information, the similarities between Hejazi's thought and *The Confessions*, and his admitted role in its "redaction" and publication, it can be speculated that he might have had a collaborative role in its creation.¹²⁰

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Some two decades after from the Constitutional Revolution, Iran was a nation defining itself in contradictory terms. Produced during the reign of Reza Shah, *The Confessions of Dolgoruki* reflects a crisis of identity between two polar opposites—one Aryan (and anti-Arab) and the other Islamic—that afflicted Iran in the 1920s and 1930s. *The Confessions* sought to negotiate the crisis through casting Baha'is as an internal Other engaged in a clandestine conspiracy with the external Other. By Othering Baha'is, *The Confessions* fused two inconsonant Aryan and Islamic modes of national identity.

Despite a far-fetched plot and numerous textual inconsistencies, *The Confessions* constructed a master narrative that marginalized historical facts and realities. The historiographers who acknowledged its inauthenticity, in their own turn, reproduced and propagated its fundamental idea. Both Adamiyyat and Shahbazi wrote that the Babi-Baha'i religions were created and propagated through plots hatched by the British. This in itself supports the notion that such an odd work of fiction created a master narrative of the foreign origin and espionage of Baha'is.

It has been said that conspiracy theories are by their very nature resilient.¹²¹ The case of *The Confessions* and the image it created in the minds of Iranians about their Baha'i countrymen would appear to confirm this claim. There were, however, three important elements specific to *The Confessions* that contributed to the influence and longevity of its narrative. First, the fiction anchors itself in a number of events related to the lives of the founders of the Babi-Baha'i religions. In doing so, it jumbles fact and fiction to give the impression that it is a narrative of real events. Second, it was published during a period marked by heightened "conspiracism" in the sociopolitical discourse following the forced abdication of Reza Shah by the Allied Powers. This occurred at a time when the masses were inclined to believe the notion that foreign powers had a hand in everything that transpired in Iran; third, its long and complex redaction history made the text a "living" entity reacting to arguments against its authenticity. Such reactions, originating from proponents of the text who longed to place it in the service of their propagandist goals, ranged from correcting factual errors (such as the dates), to solving internal incoherencies, to claiming that an original Russian version of the text existed, and finally to inventing a translator for it.

The redactions not only contributed to the longevity of the text and its unremitting influence but also reflected the sociopolitical changes in Iran from the time of the appearance of *The Confessions* in the form of a luck chain letter in the early- to mid-1930s to the 'fixed' form it took in publications that appeared in the mid- to late-1940s. As such, the changes to the text act as a mirror reflecting the history of that period.

Through crafting a foreign political genesis, *The Confessions* created a fundamental shift in the anti-Baha'i discourse. The production and proliferation of anti-Baha'i polemical works in Iran has run parallel to the spread of the Baha'i religion since its tumultuous birth in the middle part of the nineteenth century. In the polemical works written in the early period (1844 to late 1930s and early 1940s), Baha'is were condemned on straightforward religious grounds or were accused of sexual immorality. Despite many arguments dismissing its authenticity,

The Confessions created a master narrative of Babi-Baha'i connections with foreign imperialist powers, a theme that has dominated anti-Baha'i polemics ever since.

In analyzing conspiracy theories and the demonization of the Other, Leonidas Donkins has shown that a conspiratorial view of the world is a phenomenon radically opposed to the principle of tolerance—one that may jeopardize any viable moral order.¹²² The legacy of *The Confessions of Dolgoruki* in Iran is living proof of this opposition. The master narrative it created has dominated the views held by many Iranians—both intellectuals and laymen—about their Baha'i compatriots. The response has ranged from suspicion of Baha'is, to outright support for Baha'i persecution as just retribution for the “crimes” they have committed against the nation. How long this legacy will endure and what forms it will take remain to be seen.

NOTES

1. Hayden White, “The Question of Narrative in Contemporary Historical Theory,” *History and Theory* 23, no. 1 (February 1984): 1–33. Quotation is from page 21. This chapter supports White’s arguments on the ideological function of narrative history. See Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).
2. As we shall see, this text has been published under several different titles, such as “Yaddashtha-ye Dolghoruki,” “Gozaresh-e Ginyaz Dolgoruki,” “E’terafat-e Siyasi,” “Kiniaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh-e madhhab-e Bab va Baha,” and “E’terafat-e Kinyaz Dolgoruki.” In the present study, it will be referred to as *The Confessions of Dolgoruki* or *The Confessions*.
3. See the first historiographical study of *The Confessions of Dolgoruki* in Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, “Baha’isetizi va Islamgara’i dar Iran,” [Anti-Baha’ism and Islamism in Iran] *Iran Nameh* 19, nos. 1–2 (Winter/Spring 2001): 79–124; idem, “Anti-Baha’ism and Islamism in Iran,” trans. Omid Ghaemmaghami, in *The Baha’is of Iran: Socio-historical Studies*, ed. Dominic Parviz Brookshaw and Seena B. Fazel (London: Routledge, 2008): 200–31. For a discussion of *The Confessions of Dolgoruki* within the context of conspiracy theories, see Ahmad Ashraf, “The Appeal of Conspiracy Theories to Persians,” Princeton Papers (Winter 1997): 55–88; idem, “Tavahhom-e tawte’eh,” *Gofiego* (Summer 1374/1995): 7–45; and Houchang E. Chehabi, “The Paranoid Style in Iranian Historiography,” in *Iran in the 20th Century: Historiography and Political Culture*, ed. Touraj Atabaki (London: I. B. Tauris, 2009), 155–76. For a study of *The Confessions* in relation to the persecution of the Baha’is of Iran, see Moojan Momen, “Conspiracy Theories and Forgeries: The Baha’i Community of Iran and the Construction of an Internal Enemy,” forthcoming. See also, “Dolgorukov Memoirs,” *Encyclopedia Iranica*.
4. Kasravi, in 1322, wrote that the lucky chain letter had appeared “three-four years” earlier. See Ahmad Kasravi, *Baha’igari* (Tehran: Ketabforushi Paydar, n.d.), 119.
5. See Hasan E’zam Qodsi, *Khaterat-e man ya tarikh-i sad saleh-ye Iran*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Karang, 1379/2000), 2:910.
6. Our knowledge of its publication “in two-three newspapers” in 1322 is based on Kasravi’s remarks. See Ahmad Kasravi, *Baha’igari* (Tehran: Ketabforushi Paydar, n.d.), 119.
7. “Gozaresh-e Ginyaz Dolgoruki,” in Sayyed Mohammad Baqer Hejazi, *Islam va mahdaviyyat* (Tehran: n.d.), 109–47. Dating the publication of *Islam va mahdaviyyat* (and hence *The Confession* included in it) is not an easy task. Neither the book itself, nor Khan Baba Moshar’s *Fehrest-e ketanha-ye chapi*, mentions a date for publication of *Islam va mahdaviyyat*. However, at one point in the book, Hejazi refers to the year 1320/1941 as

- "last year." The writing of the book, therefore had been done in that year; the publication, however, might not have happened then. Otherwise, it was expected that Kasravi who wrote on *The Confessions* in 1322 refer to its publication and not just the appearance of it in the form of a Luck Chain. See Ahmad Kasravi, "Aftab-e Haqa'eq ya doruq-e Rosva," *Parcham* 1, no. 4 (Ordibehesht 1322): 169–77.
8. See *Vazifeh*, no. 41 (18 Mehr 1323/1944). Hejazi did not clarify who the person who had published *The Confessions* was or where he had published it.
 9. "E'terafat-e Siyasi: Yaddashtha-ye Kinyaz Dolgoruki," in *Salnameh-ye Khorasan* (Mashhad: 1322): 129–60.
 10. *Kinyaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh-e madhab-e Babi va Baha'i dar Iran* (Tehran: n.d.).
 11. For example, "Baz ham bekhaniid ta haqiqat ra bedanid: asrar-e Bab va Baha ya E'terafat-e Kinyaz Dolgoruki va asrar-e fash shodeh," 10th ed. (Esfahan: Katabforushi-ye Javadiyyeh, n.d.); and "Yaddashtha-ye: [Sic] 'Kinyaz Dolgoruki' ya asrar-e fash shodeh," 11th ed. (Mashhad: Katabforushi-ye Eslami, n.d.).
 12. "Yaddashtha-ye Dolghoruki," in Hasan E'zam QodsiQodsi, *Khaterat-e man ya tarikh-e sad saleh-ye Iran*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Karang, 1379/2000), 2:911–29.
 13. "Yaddashtha-ye Dolghoruki," 915; "Gozaresh-e Ginyaz Dolgoruki," 118–19.
 14. "E'terafat-e Siyasi," 137–38.
 15. *Kinyaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 18.
 16. On the errors and internal tensions of *The Confessions*, see Mojtaba Minouyi, "Enteqad-e ketab: sharh-e زندگانی-ye man," *Rahnama-ye ketab* 6:1 and 2. (Farvardin va Ordibehesht 1342), 25–26; Lajneh-ye Melli-e Nashr-e Athar-e Amri, *Bahthi dar e'terafat-e maj'ul montasab be Kinyaz Dolgoruki* (Tehran: Mo'asseseh-ye Melli-e Matbu'at-e Amri, 1352/1973), 23–109; [Moojan Momen,] "Conspiracies and Forgeries: The Attack upon the Baha'i Community in Iran: A Response to Dr. David Yazdan's Article, Muslim Brotherhood—Part VIII," *Persian Heritage* 9, no. 35 (2004): 27–29.
 17. Lajneh-ye Melli-e Nashr-e Athar-e Amri, *Bahthi dar e'terafat-e maj'ul montasab be Kinyaz Dolgoruki* (Tehran: Mo'asseseh-ye Melli-e Matbu'at-e Amri, 1324/1945). This book was republished in 1352/1973 with an introduction incorporating the words of Eqlal Ashtiyani, Kasravi and Minuvi refuting the authenticity of *The Confessions*.
 18. During the Qajar period, three different Russian ambassadors by the name Dolgorukov came to Iran. The first was Nikolai Andreevich (d. 1847) who was in Iran during the reign of Fath-'Ali Shah; the second was Dimitry Ivanovich (d. 1867) (the one to whom *The Confessions* is ascribed), a contemporary of Mohammad Shah and Naser Al-Din Shah; and finally, Nikolai Sergeevich (d. 1913) who came to Iran during the last years of the reign of Naser Al-Din Shah. See Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Polovtsov, *Russikii Biograficheski Slovar* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia tovarishchestra Obschestre, 1905), 6:553–54; and P.Kh. *Dvor'i 'anskii rody Rossiiskoi imperii* [Noble Families of Imperial Russia] (IPK "Vesti," 1993), 1:196.
 19. The supporters of *The Confessions* were quick to include a reference to the title and edition of a real journal (the "August 1924/1925" issue of the Russian journal *Novyi Vostok*) in the introduction of later editions, claiming that the original text of *The Confessions* had been published there. With the help of Dr. Marta Simidchieva of York University and the University of Toronto in Mississauga, the present writer reviewed all the 1924 and 1925 issues of the journal and found no references to Dolgoruki or anything written by him. I wish to record my thanks to Dr. Simidchieva for her assistance.
 20. Aleksander Tumanskii, Valentin A.Zhukovski, Aleksander Kasumovich Kazembek and Edward Browne were specifically mentioned. Lajneh-ye Melli-e Nashr-e Athar-e Amri, *Bahthi dar e'terafat*, 21.
 21. "Excerpts from Dispatches Written During 1848–1852 by Prince Dolgorukov, Russian Minister to Persia," *World Order* (Fall 1966): 17–24. According to *World Order*, a person "employed as an Oriental secretary by the Russian Legation" was a Babi. Moojan Momen

- tells us, however, that this person, Mirza Majid-i Ahi was not himself a Babi, and he may have been regarded as such because he was the brother-in-law of Baha'ullah, a prominent Babi who would later found the Baha'i religion. See Moojan Momen, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981), 6. In 1952, when the latter was imprisoned along with many other Babis in Tehran, Mirza Majid urged Dolgorouki to press the government to release him. See H. M. Balyuzi, *Baha'ullah: The King of Glory* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1980), 99. For more on Dolgorouki's dispatches, see Momen, *The Babi and Baha'i Religions 1844–1944*, 4, 5, 9–10, 75, 77–78, 92–95, and *passim*. The dispatches were first published in Mikhail Sergeevich Ivanov, *The Babi Uprisings in Iran* [Babidskie vosstaniia v Irane (1848–1852)] (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii Nauk SSSR, 1939). An expanded version of this book was published with some revisions under the title, *Antifeodal'nye vosstaniia v Irane v seredine XIX* [Anti-feudal Uprising in Iran in Mid-19th Century] (Moscow: Izd-vo "Nauka," Glav. red. vostochnoi lit-ry, 1982). We do not have data on whether the existence of the real dispatches had been an inspiration for the author of *The Confessions*. Ivanov's short biography does not reveal whether he traveled to Iran before 1939 when his book was published or whether he was in touch with Iranians while preparing the dissertation on which the book was based. See <http://www.mgimo.ru/content1.asp>.
22. For example: [Moojan Momen], "Conspiracies and Forgeries," which has been submitted by Katherine Bigelow, Director, Office of External Affairs, The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States, and Bahman Nikandish, "Mobarezeh'i najavanmardaneh: *Kinyaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh-e mazhab-i Bab va Baha' dar Iran*," *Payam Baha'i* nos. 309–310 (2005): 43–49; and Adib Masumian, *Debunking the Myths: Conspiracy Theories on the Genesis and Mission of the Baha'i Faith* (Lulu: 2009).
 23. Ahmad Kasravi, "Aftab-e haqiqat ya dorugh-e rosva," *Parcham* 1, no. 4 (Ordibehesht 1322): 172.
 24. Ahmad Kasravi, *Baha'igari* (Tehran: Ketabforushi-e Paydar, n.d.), 119.
 25. 'Abbas Iqbal-Ashtiyani, "Ma va Khanandegan," *Yadegar* 5, nos. 8 and 9 (Farvardin va Ordibehesht 1328): 148.
 26. Mahmud Mahmud, *Tarikh-e ravabet-e siyasi-e Iran va Englis dar qarn-e nuzdahom-e miladi* (Tehran: 1954), 8:143; For Taqizadeh's words see: 'Abbas Zaryab Kho'i, "Taqizadeh anchenan ke man mishenakhtam," in *Yadnameh-ye Taqizadeh*, ed. Habib Yaghma'i (Tehran: Anjoman-e Athar-e Melli, 1349), 166.
 27. Mojtaba Minouyi, "Enteqad-e ketab: sharh-e zendegani-ye man," *Rahnama-ye ketab* 6, nos. 1 and 2 (Farvardin va Ordibehesht 1342): 25–26.
 28. Following Banani's talk, representatives from the Islamic Republic of Iran distributed handouts to the participants refuting Banani's remarks. See Yamamoto Tatsuro, ed., *Proceedings of the Thirty-First International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa, Tokyo-Kyoto, 31st August–7th September 1983* (Tokyo: Toho Gakkai, 1984), 280.
 29. Denise MacEoin, *The Sources for Early Bábí Doctrine and History: A Survey* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 171.
 30. Ashraf, "Tavahhom-e Tawte'eh," 35.
 31. Tavakoli-Targhi, "Baha'i-setizi," 85–86.
 32. Fereydoun Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Iran ya varaqi az tarikh-e siyasi-e Iran* (Tehran: Adhar, 1323), 233–44.
 33. Fereydoun Adamiyat, *Amir Kabir va Iran*, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Kharazmi, 1348), 450.
 34. 'Abdollah Shabazi, "Jostarha'i az tarikh-e Baha'igari dar Iran," *Tarikh-e mo'aser-e Iran* 7, no. 27 (1382/2003).
 35. 'Abdollah Shabazi, "Sir Shapour Reporter va Koudeta-ye 28 Mordad va Shabakeh'ha-ye Ettela'ati-ye Britania va Eyalat-e Mottahedeh-ye Amrica da Iran" (1320–1332), *Fasl-nameh takhassosi-ye tarikh-e mo'aser-e Iran* 6, no. 23 (Fall 1381/2002).

36. Hashem Mohitmafi, *Tarikh-e enqelab-e Iran, 1: Moqaddamat-e mashrutiyyat*, ed. Majid Tafreshi and Javad Janfada (Tehran: Entesharat-e 'elmi, 1363/1984), 22.
37. Mohitmafi, *Moqaddamat-e mashrutiyyat*, 26.
38. Ibid., 32–39.
39. Abutorab Hoda'i, *Baha'iyat din nist*, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Farahani, n.d.), 30.
40. See Ayatollah Kashani's introduction in Anwar Wadud, *Sakhtehba-ye Baha'iyat dar sahneh-ye din va siyasat* (Tehran: Chapkhaneh Sherkat-e Matbu'at, 1326).
41. Husayn-i Khorasani, *Fajaye'-e Baha'iyat ya vaqe'eh-ye qatl-e Abarqu* (Tehran: 1331), 3.
42. 'Ali Davani, trans. and ed., *Mahdi-e maw'ud: tarjomeh jeld-e sizdah-e Behar al-anwar-e 'Allameh Majlesi* (Qom, Hekmat, 1339), 817. On his discussion of the *hadith* see Omid Ghaemmaghami, "The Year Sixty: Notes on the Intertextuality of the Hadith of Mufaddal ibn 'Umar al-Ju'fi," forthcoming.
43. Mortada Ahmad A. *Prince Dolgoruki*, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Dar al-Kotob-e Eslamiyye, 1346/1967), 36.
44. Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, *Amir Kabir ya qahraman-e mobarezeh ba este'mar*, 2nd ed. (Tehran: Daftar-e Entesharat-e Eslami, 1364), 209.
45. See Christopher Partridge and Ron Geaves, "Antisemitism, Conspiracy Culture, Christianity, and Islam: the History and Contemporary Religious Significance of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*" in *The Invention of Sacred Tradition*, ed. James R. Lewis & Olav Hammer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 75–95, quote from page 84. Partridge and Geaves explain the reason for this phenomenon as such: "One of the problems with conspiracies is that they are difficult to disprove to those committed to them. Cognitive dissonance is quickly and almost instinctively assuaged by incorporating contrary evidence in the theory itself." This mechanism, they believe, is why in case of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* the conspiracy element contributed most significantly to its longevity. Ibid.
46. See Sayyed Mohammad Baqer Najafi, *Baha'iyat* (Tehran: Tahuri, AH 1357/1978), 619–22. Bahram Afrasiyabi, *Tarikh-e jame'-e Baha'iyat: nowmasuni*, 3rd ed. (Tehran: Sokhan, 1368/1989), 342–58; idem, *Tarikh-e jame'-e Baha'iyat (kalbod shekafi-e Bayahiyat)*, 10th ed. (Tehran: Fam, 1382), 271–83.
47. 'Emad al-Din Baqi, *Dar shenakht-e hezb-e qa'edin-e zaman* (Tehran: Danesh-e Eslami, 1362), 28.
48. See Ashraf, "Tavahhom-e tawte'eh," 35–36.
49. Sa'id Zahed Zahedani, *Baha'iyat dar Iran* (Tehran: Markaz-e Asnad-e Enqelab-e Eslami, 1380), 19.
50. See 'Ali Abu Al-Hasani (Mondher), "Ezharat va Khaterat-e Ayatollah Hajj Shaykh Hosayn Lankarani darbareh-ye Babigari va Baha'igari," *Faslnameh-ye motale'at-e tarikh, vijeh nameh Baha'iyat* 4, no. 17 (Tabestan 1386/Summer 2007), 91–97.
51. *Kinyaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 8–17.
52. The Khurasan edition, mentions only the "Jews," and not "Mazdak." See "E'terafat-e Siyasi," 132.
53. *Kinyaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 21. The Khurasan edition has "Iranian race," [nejad-e Irani] rather than "Aryan." "E'terafat-e Siyasi," 140.
54. This is a reference to the ideology of Qur'anism which formed an integral component of the thought current from which the author of *The Confessions* emerged.
55. "E'terafat Siyasi" (khurasan), 137–38.
56. "Yaddashtha-ye Dolghoruki," 915; "Gozaresh-e Ginyaz Dolgoruki," 119; "E'terafat-e Siyasi," 138.
57. *Kinyaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 19. The history of the notion that Shi'ism constitutes the fifth legal school of Islam sheds light on understanding the context of the author's Weltanschauung. This idea was already proposed for the first time during the reign of Nader Shah who suppressed Shi'ism, but he did allow the Shi'is to practice their

tradition by granting them status as the fifth legal school. See Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 216. However, the issue was soon forgotten with the downfall of Nader Shah. Following late nineteenth and early twentieth century attempts at rapprochement, in 1911, six of the Shi'i *ulama* residing in Iraq signed a fatwa urging unity among Muslims. In the text of this decree, Shi'ism was referred to as "one of the five Islamic legal schools" whose conflicts had led to "the decline [*enhetar*] of Islamic states" and "the dominance of foreigners [*ajaneb*]." See al-'Erfan 3, no. 4 (Feb. 1911): 160–61. See also Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: The Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 43.

58. Kinyaz Dolgoruki *ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 10.
59. "Gozarash-e Ginyaz Dolgoruki," 113; "Yaddashtha-ye Dolghoruki," 913.
60. Kinyaz Dolgoruki *ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 10.
61. *Ibid.*, 15.
62. *Ibid.*, 43.
63. "Yaddashtha-ye Dolghoruki," 912; "Gozarash-e Ginyaz Dolgoruki," 111.
64. "E'terifat-e Siyasi," 132.
65. Kinyaz Dolgoruki *ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 8.
66. *Ibid.*, 43.
67. Shahrokh Meskub, "Melli gara'i, tamarkoz, va Farhang dar ghorub-e Qajariyeh va tolu' 'asr-e Pahlavi," in *Dastan-e adabiyat va sar gozasht-e ejtema'* (Tehran: Farzan Rooz, 1373/1994), 5–38, quotes from page 8. Meskub avers that in many places in the world, nationalism looks for a scapegoat among ethnic, racial, cultural, or religious minorities to blame for all national disappointments, to invoke or direct the anger and hatred of the masses to in order to convince them of its own ideals. He then goes on to state that in Iran, the Arabs and the Imperialist powers have been the "scapegoat"(s). Meskub, "Melli gara'i," 9.
68. See Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, "Narrative Identity in the Works of Hedayat and his Contemporaries," in Sadeq Hedayat, *His Works and His Wondrous World*, ed. Homa Katouzian (London: Routledge, 2008), 107–28, quote from pages 107–8. This nationalist memory project, Tavakoli-Targhi tells us, was configured in the nineteenth century based on "a late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century neo-Zoroastrian identity narrative that sought to dissociate Iran from Islam." This Iran-centered historical memory, "constituted the pre-Islamic age as an archaetopia—an idealized and memorialized historical period." Tavakoli-Targhi, "Narrative Identity," 108–9. See also Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi, *Refashioning Iran: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and Nationalist Historiography* (Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave in association with St. Antony's College, 2001).
69. See Rasul Ja'fariyan, *Jaryanha va sazmanha-ye mazhabi-siyasi-ye Iran: az ruy-e kar amadan-e Mohammad Reza Shah ta piruzy-e engelab-e Islami*, 1320–57, 6th repr. (Qum: 1385/2006), 703–21. A discussion of the legitimacy of such categorization and labelling is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that there were several reform oriented theologians whose major lines of thought had much in common with proponents of the Salafiyyeh. For all practical purposes, in this paper, we will use the epithet "Salafi" to refer to them. The most prominent of these theologians were Sayyed Asa Allah Kharqani and Shari'at Sanglaji. On Salafiyya see, Rainer Brunner, *Islamic Ecumenism in the 20th Century: The Azhar and Shiism between Rapprochement and Restraint*, trans. Joseph Greenman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 18, 39, 72, and passim; *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., under "Salafiyya." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., under "Wahhabiyya." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., under "Islah." Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen, *Defining Islam for the Modern Egyptian State: Moftis and Fatwas of the Dar al-Ifia* (Leiden: Brill, 1997). For a concise

- but useful discussion of the similarities and divergences of Salafi and Wahhabi thoughts, see Tayfun Atay, "The Significance of the Other in Islam: Reflections on the discourse of a Naqshbandi Circle of Turkish Origin in London," *The Muslim World*, no. 89 (Jul–Oct 1999): 455–77, particularly 467–77.
70. See Kharraqani, *Mahw al-mahum*, 38–39. The inclination of these "Salafis" towards Sunnism can be said to have been first and foremost rooted in their subscription to a belief in what has been called Qur'anism—that is to say, a wholesale rejection of most, though not all, of the *hadith* in favor of the Qur'an as the principal source of religious authority. This in itself would distance them from a normative Shi'i approach to Islam.
 71. *The Protocols* have been described as "one of the most important forgeries of modern times." Richard S. Levy, "Introduction: The Political Career of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*," in Benjamin W. Segal, *A Lie and a Libel: A History of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, trans. and ed. R. S. Levy (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 3–47. See also Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide: The Myth of the Jewish World-Conspiracy and the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Michigan: Scholars Press, 1969); Christopher Partridge and Ron Geaves, "Antisemitism, Conspiracy Culture, Christianity, and Islam: The History and Contemporary Religious Significance of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*" in *The Invention of Sacred Tradition*, ed. James R. Lewis and Olav Hammer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 75–95. For a comparison between *The Protocols* and *The Confessions*, see Moshe Sharon, "The 'Memoires of Dolgorukov' and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*," Honestly Concerned website, <http://honestlyconcerned.info/bin/articles.cgi?ID=IR12607&Category=ir&Subcategory=19> (accessed February 10, 2009).
 72. The Arabic translation of *The Protocols* was available as early as 1920; therefore, the creator of *The Confessions* could have been well aware of it. See Sharon, "The 'Memoires of Dolgorukov' and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*." For the Persian translation of *The Protocols*, see Gholamreza Sa'idi, *Khatar-e Jahud Baraye Jahane Eslam* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Ketab Forushi-ye Mohammadi, 1335/1956), 116–20.
 73. While *The Confessions of Dolgoruki* was inspired by *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, it itself seems to have been a source of inspiration for the forgery of other documents. Nearly ten years after the publication of *The Confessions* there appeared in Iran the forged memoirs of Abu al-Qasem Lahuti. See *Encyclopedia Iranica*, under "Conspiracy Theories."
 74. See Ahmad Ashraf, "The Appeal of Conspiracy Theories to Persians," *Princeton Papers* (Winter 1997), 57–88, quote from page 18. In a book published around the same time as *The Confessions*, Hosayn Kuhi Kermani the editor of the newspaper *Saba*, despite indicating in a footnote that *The Testament of Peter the Great* was "created in the name of Peter after him," in the main text refers to *The Testament* as drawing the main guidelines of Russian politics and foreign policy and then quotes an item from that document: "Do your best to get close to Istanbul as much as you can . . . Facilitate the demise of Iran, and penetrate up to the Persian Gulf." He then adds, "Almost all the successors of Peter, the Imperialists of Russia, have followed the guidelines set in this document." Hosayn Kuhi Kermani, *Az Shahrivar 1320 ta faje'eh-ye Azarbaijyan va Zanjan: tarikh-i ravabet-e Rus va Iran* (Tehran: Entesharat-i Ruznameh Nasim-e Saba, 1942), 20–21.
 75. See Rudi Matthee's chapter in this volume.
 76. See section 1 of this chapter.
 77. Hejazi, *Eslam va mahdaviyat*, 93.
 78. Morteza Ahmad A., *Prince Dolgoruki*, 38.
 79. Abd al-Rahim Talebov, *Siyasat-i Talebi* (Tehran: Shams, AH 1329/1290S/1911). Talebov penned *Siyasat-i Talebi* in AH 1320/1902. The book was published posthumously in AH 1329/1911. See Feraydoun Adamiyat, *Andisheha-ye Talebov Tabrizi* (Tehran: Entesharat-i Damawand, 1363/1984), 4.

80. Talebov, *Siyasat-e Talebi*, 3–4.
81. *Ibid.*, 5.
82. *Kinyaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 15. In this specific example, the Zell al-Soltan that the author of *the Confessions* has in mind is the son of Fath'ali Shah who crowned himself in Tehran with name 'Adel Shah; whereas the Zell al-Soltan of Talebov's *Siyasat-e Talebi* is Mas'ud Mirza, the son of Naser al-Din Shah.
83. Mohammad Bagher Hejazi, "Mo'arrefi-e ketab-e *Eslam va mahdaviyat*," *Vazifeh* 41 (18 Mehr 1323/10 October 1944).
84. See note 17.
85. See Chehabi, "The Paranoid Style," 161.
86. Karl R. Popper, "Critiques of the Classical Theories of History," in *Theories of History*, ed. Patrick Gardiner (Clencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1959), 281.
87. Leonidas Donkins, "The Conspiracy Theory, Demonization of the Other," *Innovations* 11, no. 3 (1998): 349–60, quotation from page 350.
88. For the postmodern notion of identity being contingent, only existing in relation to something else (the other) and the Other conditioning the existence of any given identity, see Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005); Kevin Hetherington, *Expressions of Identity: Space, Performance, Politics* (London: Sage Publications, 1998); and Alberto Melucci, *The Playing Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For a case study on the development of the concept of "self" through "other" in a Muslim community, see Atay, "The significance of the Other in Islam," 455–77. For a discussion of the internal Other and the external Other, and their demonization see Ziva Amishai-Maisels, "The Demonization of the 'Other' in the Visual Arts," in *Demonizing the Other: Antisemitism, Racism, and Xenophobia*, ed. Robert S. Wistrich (Amsteldijk, The Netherlands: Harwood, 1999), 44–72.
89. See Rudi Matte's article on Russo-phobia in this volume.
90. Abbas Amanat, "The Historical Roots of the Persecution of Babis and Bahais in Iran," in *The Baha'is of Iran: Socio-Historical Studies*, ed. Dominic Brookshaw and Seena Fazel (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2007), 180–81. Amanat shares with Tavakoli-Targhi and Mottahedeh the idea of Baha'is constituting the Other against which modern Iranian Shi'i identity has constructed itself. Mottahedeh has discussed the ways in which "the Babi" constituted the "negative stereotype and fetishized image against which and through which the modern nation identified itself." Negar Mottahedeh, "The Mutilated Body of the Modern Nation: Qurrat al-'Ayn Tahiri's Unveiling and the Iranian Massacre of the Babis," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 18, no. 2 (1998): 38–47. See also idem, *Representing the Unpresentable: Historical Images of National Reform from Qajars to the Islamic Republic of Iran* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008). Mohamad Tavakoli-Targhi has proposed the ways in which Iranian Islamism of twentieth century defined itself as against Baha'is as the internal Other. Tavakoli-Targhi, "Baha'isetizi."
91. The same type of melded national identity has been in order, at least for some Islamists, in postrevolutionary Iran, who have given a central position to "Iran and the Iranian nation but identified both with Islam." For this "Iranian nationalist form of Islamism," then, "deviant religion and treason to the nation" have collapsed into one another in Baha'is as the nation's internal Other. It has been alleged "not only that they were spies for foreign powers, but also that they were national apostates, defectors from the Iranian Muslim nation." See Juan R. I. Cole, "The Baha'i Minority and Nationalism in Contemporary Iran," in *Nationalism and Minority Identities in Islamic Societies*, ed. Maya Shatzmiller (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 127–63. Quotes from pages 150, 157.
92. Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 113, cited in Cole, "The Baha'i Minority," 159.

93. This connection that *The Confessions* makes between Baha'is and the foreign power has been interpreted as a way to appeal to the changes of mentality of younger members of the upper class for whom the earlier purely theological anti-Baha'i polemics were no more attractive. See Firuz Kazemzadeh, "The Baha'is of Iran: Twenty Years of Repression," *Social Research* 67, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 537–58. While this specific alleged link with the imperialists was a phenomenon of the modern world, the practice of associating the ostracized with enemies outside the community is one "familiar in other times and places." See Bernard Lewis, "Some Observations on the Significance of Heresy in the History of Islam," *Studia Islamica*, no. 1 (1953): 43–63.
94. Asadollah Kharqani, *Mahw al-mawhum wa sahw al-ma'lum* (Tehran: 1960), 2. This work was published posthumously, with an introduction by Ayatollah Sayyed Mahmud Taleqani.
95. Kharqani, *Mahw al-mawhum*, 2.
96. *Ibid.*, 2–3, see also p. 34.
97. See Jacob Torfing, *New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe, and Zizek* (Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 301.
98. See Cole's discussion of Hobsbawm's comparison between civic nations that make a place for their minorities, and the exclusionary ones that achieve their unity through singling out their minorities. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), cited in Cole, "The Baha'i Minority," 159.
99. On Shaykh Ebrahim Zanjani, see Mahdi Bamdad, *Tarikh-e Rejal-e Iran* (Tehran: Zavvar, 1347), 1:15; Abu Al-Hasan 'Alavi, "Rejal-e sadr-e mashrutiyyat," *Yaghma*, 5:3 (khordad 1331), 133; and his autobiography, Shaykh Ebrahim Zanjani, *Khaterat-e Shaykh Ebrahim Zanjani (sargozasht-e zendegani-e man)*, ed. Gholam Hosein-e Mirza Saleh (Tehran: Kavir, 1379). Regarding the latter, see Mahdi Khalaji, "Naqd-e daruni-e rawhaniyyat, gozareshi dar sekularizm," *Iran Nameh* 4 (Winter 1383): 489–511. According to Homa Nateq, the original copy of Khanjani's autobiography kept in the library of the parliament in Iran differs markedly with the published version of the book. See Homa Nateq, "Rawhaniyyat az parakandegi ta qodrat 1828–1909" *Rahavard* 83 (Summer 2008): 95. On Zanjani as the prosecutor of the revolutionary court that condemned Shaykh Fazl Allah Nuri to death, see Edward G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909* (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1966), 444; Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution, 1906–1911: Grassroots Democracy, Social Democracy, & the Origins of Feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 258, 265.
100. Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 242, 239, 245.
101. For a thorough study of Zanjani's views on the successorship of Muhammad and his Islamic political theory, see Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 30–50. He firmly believed that Islam had been distanced from its reality and his ideal was to establish "*Eslam-e haqiqi*" [real Islam]. See Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 51, 53, 55, 76, 85, 89, 94–95, and *passim*.
102. *Ibid.*, 46.
103. For Zanjani's extensive criticism of the clerics see Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 53–76.
104. As examples, see the dialogue between a Sunni and a Shi'i in Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 42–50, and the dialogues between the narrator of *The Confessions* and Hakim Ahmad Gilani in *Kinyaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 8–12.
105. The proverb "*yek morid-e khar behtar az yek deh-e shesh dang-e ast*" (an imbecile is worth more than the possession of a whole village) appear in both texts in the context of the critique of the clerics. See the oldest published version of *The Confessions*, E'zam Qodsi, *Khaterat-e man*, 925; Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 116. For passages with strikingly similar prose see *Kinyaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 17; and Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 124; also *Kinyaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 10–11, and Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 51.
106. *Kinyaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 54.

107. Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 148.
108. For his interest in reading novels see Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 149, 182, 195. On his novel-like works see 'Abd Allah Shahbazi, "Zendegi va Zamaneh-ye Ebrahim-e Zanjani, Justarha'i az Tarikh-e Tajaddod-gara'i Irani," part 1 *Zamaneh* 2, no. 10 (Tir 1382): 13–19, part 2, *Zamaneh* 2, no. 11 (Mordad 1382): 25–28, part 3, *Zamaneh* 2, no. 12 (Shahrivar 1382): 15–18. Based on the information Shahbazi gives us in these articles, it can be said that Zanjani's novel-like works share with *The Confessions* a melding of fact and fiction and an authorial preference to remain anonymous.
109. Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 195.
110. *Ibid.*, 133–39.
111. *Rajm al-dajjal fi radd-i Bab al-dalal*, 2 vols. (AH 1313), manuscript in private hands. See 'Ali Abu Al-Hasani (Mondher), *Shaykh Ebrahim Zanjani: zaman, zendegi, khaterat, be damimeh-ye bahthi dar "velayat-e takwini" peyambar va a'emمه ma'sumin* (Tehran: Mo'asseseh-ye Motale'at Tarikh-e Iran-e Mo'aser Iran, 1384), 23. See also, Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 149.
112. Zanjani was closely associated with Zoka' al-Mulk Forughi, and Sadr al-Ulama; see Iraj Afshar, ed., *Awraq-e tazebyab-e mashrutiyyat, marbut be salha-ye 1325–1330* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Javidan, 1359), 335–45. He was also a close friend of and Hajj Sayyah Mahallati who was closely connected with Azalis and may have himself been one. See Zanjani, *Khaterat*, On Sayyah being an Azali see Mangol Bayat, *Iran's First Revolution: Shi'ism and the Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1909* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 67–68.
113. Zanjani, *Khaterat*, 124, 148.
114. *Ibid.*, 185, 202, 204, 209.
115. See *ibid.*, 155, 195. For "scientific" passages in *The Confessions*, see the words of 'Hakim Ahmad Gilani' on the influence of narcotics and wine. *Kinyaz Dolgoruki ya asrar-e peydayesh*, 37–38, 41.
116. See *Vazifeh*, no. 41 (18 Mehr 1323/1944). See also the section "Different Editions" in this article.
117. See Hejazi, *Islam va mahdaviyat*, 4. See also references to Hejazi in the section of this paper on the sociohistorical context of the appearance of *The Confessions*.
118. Hejazi, *Islam va mahdaviyat*, 32–33, 57.
119. Hejazi wrote a number of novels including *Darvish Qorban*, *Tufan-e bala*, and *Firuzeh*.
120. Kasravi's reference to an "unremarkable" (*bi mayeh*) man having created *The Confessions* could well have been made about Hejazi, given the latter's role in 'redacting' and publishing *The Confessions*, his romance novels and the former's dislike of such novels in general. See Kasravi, *Baha'igari*, 70; For Kasravi's view on novels see Ahmad Kasravi, "Yekom-e Day Mah va Dastanash," *Parcham* 1, no. 1 (Farvardin 1322), 1–7. Some Baha'is who were alive when *The Confessions* were first published were apparently of the opinion that *The Confessions* were produced by a group of people rather than a single person. See, for example, 'Abd al-Hamid Eshraq-Khavari, Aqdah al-falah (Tehran: Mo'asseseh-ye Melli-e Nashr-e Athar-e Amri, 1975–76), 2: 48–49. The person whom Eshraqkhavari considered the "head" of the supposed group of authors died circa the mid-1960s. From among the people whom we know have had a role in the publication and propagation of *The Confessions*, this could correspond to either Sayyed Mohammad Baqer Hejazi (d. ca. mid-1960) or Mohammad Kholesizadeh (d. 1963).
121. See Partridge and Geaves, "Antisemitism, Conspiracy Culture," 84.
122. Leonidas Donkins, "The Conspiracy Theory, Demonization of the Other," *Innovations* 11, no. 3 (1998): 349–60.

IRANIAN NATIONALISM AND ZOROASTRIAN IDENTITY BETWEEN CYRUS AND ZOROASTER

MONICA M. RINGER

ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS PERFORMANCES OF Iranian nationalism was the elaborately choreographed celebration of 2,500 years of Iranian monarchy by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi before Cyrus the Great's tomb in 1971. Scholars have pointed to Iranian nationalism's use of the ancient past in an attempt to construct a modern, secular nationalism free from the institutional power of the *ulama* and legal constraints of *shari'a* law. Iran as a nation and identity was thereby imagined as an entity of *longue durée*—and thus distinguishable from more recent history of decadence and decline.¹ Increased centralization, accompanied by the reduction of *ulama* power and *shari'a* law led to increased legal status and socioeconomic opportunities for religious minorities. The emphasis on the ancient past was also welcomed by religious minorities eager to embrace a national identity that was not primarily Islamic. Although all religious minorities benefitted from nationalism and increased centralization and secularization, no minority group was as closely associated with the pre-Islamic past than the Zoroastrians.

Iranian nationalism's relationship to the Zoroastrian community was unique. The ancient, pre-Islamic past of the Achaemenid and Sasanian Empires, although (re)imagined as a secular, historic, and national past, was in fact ethnically Persian and religiously Zoroastrian.² Nationalism was envisioned as inclusive—seeking to embrace and unify all Iranians—yet was unable to include all Iranians equally. The Zoroastrian community not only appreciated this fact but actively participated in promoting nationalism and their special place in it. Yet their enthusiasm was not without some ambivalence. The intimacy between Iranian Zoroastrians and Iranian nationalism obscure the fundamental underlying tensions in this relationship. Nationalism produced profound complications within the Zoroastrian community over the basis of its identity. By seeking to universalize the pre-Islamic past, the past was articulated as a historic and thus national past. But in so doing, the

secularization of this past denuded it of religious content. Were the Zoroastrians thus an ethno-historic group? Or a religious group defined by tenets of faith? Modern, reformist Zoroastrianism in the Pahlavi period increasingly defined itself as an individual faith yet the community never abandoned a strong, and implicitly contradictory, sense of historico-ethnic identity. This chapter explores the Zoroastrian articulation of, participation in and uneasy relationship to nationalism in the Pahlavi period.

Iranian nationalism was constructed as modern, accessible, and retrievable. Ancient Iran was claimed as the origin and repository of modern ideas and institutions that could be retrieved and resuscitated. This past was imagined not as a Persian and Zoroastrian past, but as a secular historic past that was thereby the inheritance of all Iranians, regardless of religious or ethnic affiliation. This claim to universality was an essential component in nationalism's ideological utility and stood at the basis of claims of authenticity. Positing ancient Iran as the foundation of modern Iran enabled modernity to be claimed as intrinsic, inherently Iranian, and thus not imitative or adoptive. Nationalism also contained a strong element of secular citizenship, which provided an ideological basis for equality of citizenship as opposed to inequality based on religious affiliation.³ Iranian-ness, in this formulation, was accessible to all, not the preserve of one group, but instead dependent on the conscious embrace of nationalism's ideology and its modern project.

Despite these significant elements of universalism and accessibility, nationalism's location in the pre-Islamic period inevitably privileged the Zoroastrians as the most authentic and thus the most Iranian. The tension between inclusivity and exclusivity remained unresolved and found frequent expression in the Zoroastrian community. For example, the principal pillars of nationalism that permitted the resuscitation and accessibility of ancient Iran were language, literature, and the celebration of selective historical sites as monuments to ancient (and thus present) national identity.⁴ Persian (Farsi) was claimed as a common national language—local and linguistic (ethnic) differences were deemphasized through compulsory acquisition of Persian in schools and the use of Persian in the vast majority of publications, literary and otherwise. Persian was thus claimed as the language of all Iranians, whether native Persian speakers or not. To this end, many “non-Persian” Arabic-based words were eliminated, and new Persian words invented for use. The Zoroastrians made particular claims to ownership of the Persian language. An editorial in *Mahnameh-ye Zartoshtian* argued that the people of Fars, Persian Dari speakers (explicitly Zoroastrians), were the “original Iranians” and advocated ridding Persian of foreign, read Arab, elements and returning to what he termed “*Shahnameh*” Persian.⁵ The Zoroastrian Anjoman of Tehran situated itself as a preserver of Iranian culture by sponsoring students interested in the literature and culture of ancient Iran to study abroad.⁶

The *Shahnameh* was seized upon and promoted by nationalists as the quintessential Iranian epic, written in “pure” Persian, and capturing the nostalgia for the pre-Islamic era of Iranian greatness. The *Shahnameh* clearly differentiates Iranians from non-Iranians, and identifies Arabs with Islam (and implicitly thus, Islam as an Arab and thus foreign religion). It should also be noted that the *Shahnameh* commemorates values of royalty, nobility, and an ethical system that differs markedly from Islamic-based virtues. For example, the knight-hero, not the Prophet Mohammad is the ideal man, aristocratic privilege trumps equality of faith, and women in

the *Shahnameh* more closely resemble early Islamic models of political action and power than medieval *shari'a*-oriented prescriptions of seclusion. In practice, pre-Islamic Persian conceptions of kingship were Islamicized in the political theory of al-Ghazzali and Nizam al-Mulk, and the *synthesis* of early Islamic, Arab tribal, and Persian ideas of kingship became the functioning norm for much of Islamic (and Iranian) history. The *Shahnameh's* association with the ancient past was emphasized by Zoroastrians who considered the book an actual history. The association of the *Shahnameh* with non-Muslim non-Arab "Iranian-ness" and thus Zoroastrianism was perfectly illustrated by an Iranian Muslim who sought to convert to Zoroastrianism in the Pahlavi period. As he explained it, he "had always been a nationalist and had read a little Ferdowsi"; since he considered himself Iranian, not Arab, he felt that he should adhere to an Iranian, not an Arab religion.⁷ Not surprisingly, one of the first "historical sites" to be celebrated in Pahlavi Iran was the discovery and refurbishing of Ferdowsi's tomb in Khurasan in 1935. This project was directed by Zoroastrian parliamentary representative and head of the Tehran Zoroastrian anjoman, Kay Khosrow Shahrokh at Reza Shah's request.⁸

The anti-Arab component in Iranian nationalism was seized on by the Zoroastrian community. It often bled into indistinct anti-Muslim attitudes as well, although the Zoroastrian community was always careful not to criticize Islam directly. Articles in Zoroastrian journals frequently referred to the coming of Arabs (and thus Islam) to Iran as a calamity. Arabs were clearly distinguished from "Iranians" as uncivilized. In seeking to answer the nagging problem of why the Arabs defeated the Persian Empire, authors were at pains to insist that it had nothing to do with cultural or religious superiority.⁹ The religious implications were explicitly refuted in a public lecture by Hashem Reza in *Hukht*, the organ of the Zoroastrian Anjoman of Tehran. He insisted that "everyone knows that Arabs had no culture or civilization." When the Arabs came to Iran they brought with them destruction. He describes Islam as "intolerant" and "harsh" and responsible for destroying "humanity, morals, and kindness." To the contrary, he asserted that the Zoroastrian Avesta inculcates strong morals, culture, and love for humanity.¹⁰

The lines between Zoroastrian and Iranian identity were naturally indistinct. The difference between Zoroastrian religious ceremonies and national, secular ceremonies was deliberately blurred both by the Pahlavi monarchs and by the Zoroastrian community itself. Reza Shah adopted Zoroastrian calendar names, and placed the Zoroastrian Fravahar symbol on the National Bank and the Ministry of Justice.¹¹ Reza Shah had a close relationship with the Zoroastrian parliamentary representative Kay Khosrow Shahrokh, and entrusted him with many governmental tasks on his behalf.¹² Reza Shah was also sympathetic to Indian Zoroastrians (Parsis), inviting delegations to Iran and even offering to facilitate their settlement in Iran. Dinshah Irani, the Parsi founder of both the Iranian Zoroastrian Anjoman and the Iran League in India, was invited by Reza Shah to Iran in 1932 as leader of a Parsi delegation. Reza Shah awarded him honors and entrusted him with a message to take back to the Parsi community in India:

You Parsis are as much the children of this soil as any other Iranis, and so you are as much entitled to have your proper share in its development as any other nationals. We estimate Our Empire's resources to be even greater than those of America, and in tapping them you can take your proper part. We do not want you to come all

bag and baggage; just wait a little and watch. If you find the proposition beneficial both to yourselves and to this land, then do come and We shall greet you with open arms, as We might Our dear brothers and sisters. Iran is a vast country pregnant with many advantages and fresh fields waiting for development. *We suggest that the Parsis, who are still the sons of Iran, though separated from her, should look upon this country of to-day as their own*, and differentiate it from its immediate past, and strive to derive benefit from her developments.¹³

Reza Shah's interest in Zoroastrianism even led one American diplomat to speculate that the shah might one day establish it as the state religion.¹⁴ Reza Shah's heir, Mohamad Reza Pahlavi, continued his father's emphasis on Iranian nationalism and the resultant nationalization and secularization of the Zoroastrian past and religion. He encouraged the performance of *Nowruz* and the winter-solstice celebration of *Mehragan* as national holidays. Prominent Zoroastrians, Mobed Rostam Shahzadi and Ardeshir Mobed, were invited to the palace for Zoroastrian festivals.¹⁵

Not surprisingly, Zoroastrians frequently laid claim to preeminence as the most Iranian of Iranians. A writer in the journal *Pendarha* exclaimed that "the [Zoroastrian] youth have not forgotten old ways and ancient customs. You are the souvenir of an illustrious past. Long live the king."¹⁶ This idea was also voiced by Muslim Iranians. For example, in 1979 Ayat Sadughi speaking in Yazd noted that "Zoroastrians are the roots of Iran. We Moslems are like the branches of a tree, if our roots are cut off, we shall shrivel up and die."¹⁷ The Zoroastrian community encouraged the identification of national symbols, sites, and ceremonies with Zoroastrian historical and religious ones. For example the *Sadeh* religious ceremony in Shiraz was celebrated at the historical site of *Nakhsh-e Rostam* and inaugurated by the singing of the national anthem.¹⁸ *Nowruz* in particular was characterized as an Iranian and thus national holiday. In an article in the Zoroastrian journal *Pandarha*, the author described *Nowruz* as an ancient Iranian festival that had persisted despite Arab attempts to wipe it out.¹⁹ Consistent with nationalism's secularization of the Zoroastrian past, Zoroastrians themselves de-emphasized the religious nature of this ceremony. *Nowruz* was portrayed as a day of remembrance of the mythical King Jamshid's discovery of fire, and closely identified with "the celebration of royalty and [royal] *farr*."²⁰ The importance of kingship was stressed as an integral component of the Avesta.²¹

Zoroastrians consistently emphasized their loyalty to the monarchy. Their noted monarchism had a number of underlying reasons. It was foremost a commitment to the Pahlavi monarchy as it promoted centralization, secularization and modernization with the concomitant reduction in the institutional and ideological power of the *ulama* and Islamic law, respectively. The central government had been responsible for initiating and protecting legal, social, economic, and political advances of minorities since the late nineteenth century. Zoroastrian attachment to the monarchy also stemmed from the nationalist emphasis on the ancient glories of the Persian monarchies that were seized on by both Zoroastrians and the Pahlavi monarchs. The Zoroastrians repeatedly mention the institution of kingship as a respected component of Zoroastrian religious tradition. This also enabled a disassociation from Islam as marking the end of the ancient past of might and glory of the Persian Empire. The Zoroastrian press is full of eulogies to Reza Shah who

is lauded as having brought Iran back on the path of greatness and assuming her rightful place as a leader of civilization.²² Not coincidentally, the 2,500-year anniversary of the Persian monarchy was claimed by Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and celebrated with much fanfare. The Zoroastrian community in Iran and India were actively involved in preparing events to coincide with the celebration. It was seen as an opportunity to promote awareness on the international stage of Zoroastrian religion, the Zoroastrian historical past and Iranian civilization.²³

Zoroastrian traditions were posited as models for Iranian modernity by the Zoroastrian community. Contemporary Iranian society, if purged of the nonauthentic and if firmly anchored in the traditions of the pre-Islamic past, could in fact become modern and in so doing recapture Iran's glorious place as a leader among nations. In addition to obvious historical associations of pre-Islamic Iran with the Zoroastrian past, Zoroastrians also marshaled theological arguments to assert the essential modernity of Zoroastrianism. These arguments exhibit similar tensions between universality (inclusivity) and particularism (exclusivity) as do the historically based arguments. The theological arguments claimed that Zoroastrianism was consistent with modern values (women's rights, science, and progress). As hallmarks of Iranian-ness and pre-Islamic "authenticity" the Zoroastrians both symbolized this modern project and went a step further by claiming to be the *originators* of many of these modern values.

In community lectures and articles, it was frequently posited not only that Zoroastrian *religious* ideals were *consistent* with the modern agenda but that Zoroaster's teaching was in fact *the origin of their first articulation*. Zoroaster was the first to establish a monotheistic religion and to preach a simple ethical religion suitable for contemporary Iranians. In a public lecture given in 1965 titled "The Teachings of Zoroaster and the New Civilization," the audience was instructed that the subject itself "is not just for Zoroastrians, but for all Iranians interested in this country and those who know about their history and glory of the past." The speaker went on to explain that "thousands of years ago, the teachings of Zoroaster can be compared with today's humanism," and that his teachings continue to be relevant in the twentieth century. Zoroaster's teachings about humanity and human happiness were claimed to be "true" according to modern principles of economics, as well as contemporary social values, according to the speaker. In another lecture given by a Zoroastrian priest on the occasion of the anniversary of Zoroaster's birthday, the Zoroastrian tenets of ritual purity were given scientific certification: "now we have scientific proof of the polluting danger of microbes." In yet another public lecture, Dr. Sarefnia argued that "Zoroaster was the first prophet of mankind who taught peace, the promotion of agriculture, civility and love of homeland." Zoroaster's message is universal: "That which Zoroaster taught thousands of years ago is now in the twentieth century the essence of civilization and salvation."²⁴ Zoroastrian theological compatibilities with modernity credit Iranians as the originators of these ideas, and even go further by presenting Iranians as the originators of something universal, something that generated human "progress" and the "civilization" of mankind. Zoroastrianism is presented as the crucible of universal modern social values. The *historical* argument for resting modernity on the pre-Islamic past was easier to extend to contemporary Iranians, who, even if not Zoroastrian, still in a sense shared this historical past. It was trickier to Iranianize Zoroastrian *religion* and claim that somehow Muslim Iranians were also its inheritors. A resolution

was attempted by making the argument for universalism according to which all monotheists—all Christians, Jews and Muslims—shared in Zoroaster's legacy and were thus in a sense also the inheritors of his message. Zoroaster established a set of universal ethics for all mankind.

Zoroastrianism was claimed as the first modern religion and therefore consistent with modern ideals of rationalism, science, hygiene, and women's rights. Claims that the Zoroastrian *historical* past enjoyed gender equality, freedom, and social justice abound in the Zoroastrian journals. For example, although civilized countries now tout the importance of women's rights, they had always been important in Zoroastrian religious text and historical tradition.²⁵ Another example from the Zoroastrian journal *Hukht* reads, "His Majesty ordered that in order to renew the majesty and glory of ancient Iran, all practices and laws of the old Iran should be followed—including freedom of women to pursue their own destinies . . . in ancient Iran men and women were equal . . . now women are out from behind the black curtain of *hejab* and are accepting their rights. Zoroastrian women have established organizations and societies in the service of the king and are bearing fruit in advancing public health, and the culture of our country."²⁶ Zoroastrian women's organizations were deeply involved in promoting the ideals of the new modern woman as quintessentially Zoroastrian. The provincial, Yazd-based Zoroastrian women's organization (the *Sazman-e Zanan-e Zartoshtian-e Yazd* or the *Jalaseh-ye Zanan-e Zartoshtian-e Yazd*) was first established in 1925 in the context of Reza Shah's promotion of modernization. In the Zoroastrian community's own history of this organization, based on the records of the organization itself, the connection between modernizing women and modernizing religion is made explicit:

The ignorant and prejudiced realized that cleanliness and dirtiness were not functions of which religious community you belonged to, but rather whether your clothes were clean and you lived a clean life. [The Zoroastrian women who founded the organization] believed that Zoroastrians worshipped Ahura Mazda and had the book of the Avesta. They believed that the principles of their religion were good thoughts, good words, good deeds and following the path of cleanliness and righteousness, the love of shah and country, humanity and culture. They understood that Zoroastrians were the true Iranians and the true heirs of this land. And that Zoroastrian women needed to gather together . . . and pursue their goals of ending deprivation and spreading culture and raising the level of knowledge, awareness of religious practices and fighting against superstition. [They organized in order to] end their backwardness.²⁷

What is clear in this quotation is the firm connection of the "New" woman agenda of social activism, hygiene, and education, with nationalist notions of Zoroastrian identity and goals of ending backwardness and its association with filth. Particularly interesting is the additional conviction that religion too needs modernizing. Modern religion reconsiders Tradition and redraws the line between "true religion" and "superstition" using the yardstick of compatibility with modern values. Modern religion is rational, internalized and ethical, and placed itself at odds with "tradition" and "ritual" as failures to understand the underlying intent of religion and to thus move into a more spiritual and rationalized relationship to religious performance.

This new understanding of Zoroastrianism was a function of the Parsi and subsequently Iranian Zoroastrian reform movements. Parsi religious reform began in the 1850s and left a deep footprint in the Iranian Zoroastrian community.²⁸ Iranian reformism was most forcefully argued by Kay Khosrow Shahrokh in the 1920s and retained its essential features in the subsequent Pahlavi period. Zoroastrian reformism was characterized by a rationalization of religion and consequent emphasis on individual spirituality and ethical responsibility. Rational religion eschewed external mediation between individuals and God, instead promoting the interiorization of piety and its outward expression as ethical behavior in society. Ritual was seen as irrational and the performance of ritual in public viewed as essentially inimical to the emphasis on the universal ethical foundation of all religions. Kay Khosrow Shahrokh espoused these ideas, which became widely accepted in theory, although not always corresponding to community practice.²⁹ Shahrokh's articulation of reformist Zoroastrianism was frequently expressed in public lectures on religion sponsored by Zoroastrian groups, as well as in articles and editorials in Zoroastrian journals. For example, Mobed Firuz Azargoshasp argued that Zoroaster knew God as fatherly and kind. He established monotheism and an ethical view of world with consequent responsibilities of individuals.³⁰ Zoroastrians must work to create the "heavenly kingdom" of equality and universal well-being in this world. People should work on their souls, not worldly gain.³¹ Individual spirituality was frequently linked to social responsibility.³²

Modern rational religion, although firmly embraced by the Zoroastrian community, was also partly responsible for a lack of community identity. The de-emphasis on ritual and the performance of difference as opposed to the emphasis on individual faith as ethical behavior stressed the nature of religion as faith, rather than ritual practice and particularism. This contributed to a decline in participation in religious observance, something that the Zoroastrian community viewed with concern. The problem of youth not having faith and not interested in religion was the subject of a public lecture by Mobed Rostam Shahzadi who worried about eventual diminishing numbers of Iranian Zoroastrians.³³

The Zoroastrian Anjoman of Tehran and other community organizations sought to educate Zoroastrians about their religion in an attempt to revive identity and practice. Zoroastrians were urged to differentiate Zoroastrian religious practice from Muslim practice. For example, they were urged to wear white only at religious ceremonies, rather than black as was typical of Muslims.³⁴ Animal sacrifice was another practice that the Zoroastrian community leaders sought to eliminate, arguing that it had no basis in Zoroastrianism.³⁵ Mobed Rostam Shahzadi explained that Zoroastrianism, despite its antiquity, was an evolved religion. Sacrifice, typical of ancient religions, was outlawed by Zoroaster.³⁶ In a thinly veiled denunciation of Islamic practice as irrational, Shahzadi declared that "sacrifice is senseless and illogical and not practiced by Parsees" and noted that the Zoroastrian Anjoman of Tehran and the Council of Mobeds (*Konkash-e Mobedan*) of Yazd had both forbidden it.³⁷

The Dari dialect was also seized on as quintessentially Zoroastrian. Leaders sought to maintain it as a "pillar" of Zoroastrian identity, although the youth increasingly did not speak it.³⁸ The preservation of Dari as a language particular to Iranian Zoroastrians was of special interest to prominent philanthropist and community activist Morvarid Khanum Giv.³⁹ In order to preserve the use and knowledge of

Dari she ordered that Zoroastrian students in the Tehran Pars development must always speak Dari in religious classes that were held three times a week.⁴⁰

Dwindling attendance at community religious ceremonies was countered in the post-1960 period by new Zoroastrian community organizations that sought to combine religious performance with socialization and other activities. Both the youth group Fravahar and the Women's Anjoman, as well as the Zoroastrian Anjoman of Tehran, sponsored religious ceremonies that combined the teaching of Zoroastrianism with social events. The Zoroastrian Anjoman of Tehran decided to hold monthly lectures on religion. An editorial in the journal *Mahnameh-ye Zartoshtian* encouraged people to attend, promising that "this will create feelings of faith and love of religion and Zoroastrian-ness and . . . in this way develop a sense of unity and togetherness and similar spirit and maybe even you will learn more about Zoroastrianism."⁴¹

The inherent conflict between religion as faith and religion as community identity remained in full force in the Zoroastrian community. This deep ambivalence about the essential nature of Zoroastrian religious identity was exacerbated by Iranian nationalism. The Zoroastrian community's embrace of Pahlavi modernizing programs, secular culture, citizenship, and westernization was inseparable from its rapid growth in terms of economic wealth, social status, and political power. The Zoroastrian community's fortunes were in many ways tied to the official promotion of modernization, secularism, and Iranian nationalism. At the same time, nationalism's claim that the ancient past was a national past, universally accessible and claimable by all Iranians created strong ambivalence in the nature of Iranian Zoroastrian identity. The secularization of the ancient past and emphasis of Zoroastrians as "authentic" Iranians suggested that Zoroastrians were in a sense an ethnicity. If their religious holidays were national holidays, and Zoroastrians exemplars of Iranian-ness, then what was the status of Zoroastrian religious practice and belief? The question revolved around what determined Zoroastrian identity: faith or birth. The tensions about identity were clearly an issue of tension not just *between* the state and the Zoroastrian community but also *within* the community itself. Nowhere was this more obvious than in the debates surrounding the twin problems of marriage and conversion.

As socioeconomic Iranian elites of all religious backgrounds increasingly sent their children abroad to Europe and the United States to pursue higher education in the 1960s and 1970s, the social and cultural fallout from time spent abroad began to be felt. In particular, the Zoroastrian community, as a minority community, suffered from Zoroastrians marrying foreigners (and thus not fellow Zoroastrians). This negatively affected community cohesion, since Zoroastrians married to foreigners either did not return to Iran or upon their return were less enthusiastic about participating in community activities. The problem was so intensely felt that it was likened to the kidnapping and forcible conversion of Zoroastrian girls in the premodern, Islamic period: "I remember when . . . girls from our villages were taken away and converted and how miserable we all were. But today we are unaware of a danger even greater, and more home-wreaking"—study abroad. As one editorial in a Zoroastrian journal lamented, "this might be of no consequence to other communities and religions but for our small community, the loss of each person is a problem."⁴² It was also a problem with the integration of children from these

marriages into the Zoroastrian community, and with the growing issue of whether or not a non-Zoroastrian-born spouse might in fact *convert* to Zoroastrianism.

What we see here from this brief sketch of the problem, is the inherent conflict between community identity, religious identity and nationalism. On the one hand we have the paradox of Zoroastrian enthusiastic adoption of the modernizing national agenda, yet an adoption that in its effects, can and did lead to loss of community. Study abroad threatened the community with loss of its members. We also see the related problem of identity: what is a Zoroastrian: primarily a member of a religious community? Or a member of an ethnohistorical community? Can one join by adopting the tenets of faith? Or must one be born into the community? These were not easy questions. They were all the more complicated given in a Muslim context, which forbade apostasy from Islam. Although there were conversions from Islam in the 1960s and 1970s, the National Zoroastrian Organization never sanctioned them, perhaps for political reasons, although a Zoroastrian priest was found to perform initiation ceremonies.⁴³ At the Third World Zoroastrian Congress in 1968 conversion of non-Zoroastrian *spouses* was condoned, although with the understanding that these spouses would not be apostatizing from Islam. More than ten foreign-born spouses in Iran took advantage of this ruling.⁴⁴ Yet the notion, consistent with Zoroastrianism as a modern rational religion, that faith denoted identity never led to the abandonment of Zoroastrian identity as an ethnohistoric community. Commenting on the conversion of forty or so Muslims in Abadan to Zoroastrianism in the 1970s, a Zoroastrian woman voiced her opposition in ethnic terms: "Zoroastrianism is a race and a culture. When we suffered persecution, where were these would-be Zoroastrians?"⁴⁵

Zoroastrianism as a religion contained strong elements of both universalism and particularism. Zoroastrianism was claimed as universal by insisting on its essential modernity. This was partly an argument about the universal validity and applicability of Zoroastrian values and the past in order to claim authenticity and thus the intrinsic capacity of modernizing, avoiding the charge of imitation of Western models. But this argument also implicitly rested on a substantially different notion of what religion *was*. Modern Zoroastrianism—the result of Zoroastrian reformism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—promoted the acceptance of secularism and citizenship in important ways. Adopting a deist notion of religions as human phenomena that in essence *all* provided a similar impetus for individual ethical behavior meant that religious difference was not based on truth value so much as historical context. Religion was privatized not in the sense of reducing the role of religion, but in the sense that public performance of sectarian identity and ritualism was abandoned in favor of individual spirituality and internalized piety. This meant that individual consciousness of God led to ethical behavior in society—public participation and civic duty. Religious universalism, internalization, and privatization opened up space for the articulation of national identities and public participation of equality of citizenship.

Iranian nationalism, Zoroastrian community identity and the changing nature of religion and its relationship to society were indissolubly connected in Pahlavi Iran. Iranian nationalism, due to its reliance on the secularization of the ancient past, contained fundamental conflicts between inclusivity and exclusivity—with Iranian-ness so closely associated with the Zoroastrian past. On the one hand, it had to be a secular past in order to include all Iranians as citizens and equal participants

in the nation. On the other hand, it was impossible to completely disassociate Zoroastrians from this past, and thus to include Shi'i Muslims and other religious minorities equally. The Zoroastrian community also suffered from the tensions this created in their identity, since the nationalization of their religious past and their religious ceremonies simultaneously voided them of religious content.

NOTES

1. On the emergence and articulation of Iranian nationalism, see Afshin Marashi, *Nationalizing Iran: Culture, Power, and the State 1870–1940* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008).
2. Zoroastrianism spread under the Achaemenians. Cyrus the Great is generally believed to have practiced Zoroastrianism. Boyce claims that “his actions were . . . those of a loyal Mazda-worshipper.” See Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge, 1979), 51–52. Subsequently, Sasanian Iran adopted Zoroastrianism as the state religion.
3. Full secularization, which would have permitted equality of citizenship, was never enacted in Iran. Instead, Islam remained the religion of state, Muslims enjoyed certain privileges prohibited to non-Muslims, and legal identity remained a function of religious sectarianism. See Suad Joseph, ed., *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000).
4. Talinn Grigor, “Recultivating ‘Good Taste’: The Early Pahlavi Modernists and Their Society for National Heritage,” *Iranian Studies* 37, no. 1 (March 2004): 17–45.
5. Khodadad Khodabakhshi, “Farsi or Dari” *Mahnameh-ye Zartoshtian* (Nowruz, 2535 Shahanshahi), 25–26. Although held up as the epitome of a “pure” Persian text, the *Shahnameh* is not devoid of Arabic words.
6. *Pandarha* (2, 4 2499 Shahanshahi), 43.
7. Janet Kestenberg Amighi, *The Zoroastrians of Iran: Conversion, Assimilation, or Persistence* (New York: AMS Press, 1990), 229–30.
8. Kay Khosrow Shahrokh, *The Memoirs of Kay Keikhosrow Shahrokh*, trans. and ed. Shahrokh Shahrokh and Rashna Writer (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994).
9. Ibrahim Pourdavud, “Why Have Iranians Lost out to Newcomers?” *Pandarha* 2, no. 2 (Bahman 1338): 11–13, continued in *Pandarha* 2, no. 3: 11–16. See also Hashem Reza, “Mistakes of Islamic Scholars Regarding the Teachings of Zardosht,” *Hukht* (14, 1 1342/1965) 24–38.
10. Hashem Reza, “Mistakes of Islamic Scholars Regarding the Teachings of Zardosht,” lecture sponsored by Sazeman-e Fravahar-e Javanan-e Zartoshtian published in *Hukht* (14, 1 1342/1965), 24–38; continued in 11–12, 46–54.
11. Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 219, and Amighi, *Zoroastrians of Iran*, 170.
12. On Shahrokh’s relationship to Reza Shah see Shahrokh, *Memoirs*.
13. The Shah’s missive is reproduced in Sir Jehangir C. Coyajee, “A Brief Life-Sketch of the Late Mr. Dinshah Jeejeebhoy Irani,” in *Dinshah Irani Memorial Volume: Papers on Zoroastrian and Iranian Subjects* (Bombay: Dinshah J. Irani Memorial Fund Committee, 1948), i–xiii. Emphasis added.
14. U.S. State Department, letter dated February 3, 1932, RG59/250, file 891.404/24, National Archives, 2.
15. Ardeshir Mobed was the secretary of the Zoroastrian Anjoman of Tehran. See, for example, *Pandarha* (2, 1 1338), inside cover; *Pandarha* (2, 4 2499), 2; and Amighi, *Zoroastrians of Iran*, 277–78.
16. Mohamad Ali Asef, *Pendarha* (2, 8 2499 Shahanshahi), 34.
17. Amighi, *Zoroastrians of Iran*, 229.

18. *Mahnameh-ye Zartoshtian* (Nowruz, 2535 Shahanshahi), 78.
19. Mohandes Ghafari, "Remarks of Mr. Mohandes Ghaffari, Farmandar of Yazd Province on the Occasion of Nowruz," *Pandarha* (2, 5, 2499), 30.
20. "Festival Greetings," *Pandarha* (2, 4, 2499 Shahanshahi), 2, 37.
21. Ibid.
22. Mohandes Ghaffari, "On the Occasion of Reza Shah's Birthday," *Pandarha* (2, 4, 2499 Shahanshahi), 24–25, 31.
23. "A'ineh," *Pandarha* (2, 10, 2499 Shahanshahi), 25–26.
24. *Hukht* (14, 3 1342), 4.
25. "Teachings of Zoroaster and the New Civilization," public lecture sponsored by Sazeman'e Fravahar Esfand 2, 1341, in *Hukht* (14, 1 1342/1965), 6–9, 57–58.
26. *Hukht* (14, 1 1342), 4.
27. Parvin Yaynejad, "The Establishment of The Conference of Zoroastrian Women of Yazd Forty Years Ago," *Hukht* (14, 6 1342), 16–17; continued (14, 7 1342), 24–26.
28. See Monica M. Ringer, "Reform Transplanted: Parsi Agents of Change amongst Zoroastrians in Nineteenth-Century Iran," *Iranian Studies* (September 2009).
29. Kay Khosrow Shahrokh, *A'ineh-ye A'in-e Mazdasna* (Bombay: Mozzafari Publishers, 1921), second edition, and *Zartosht: Payghambari keh as now bayad shenakht (Forough-e Mazdasna)*, ed., Farzan Kayani (Tehran: Jami Publishers, 1380); and his *Memoirs*.
30. Mobed Firuz Azargoshasp, "The Message of Zoroaster," *Mahnameh-ye Zartoshtian* (Nowruz 2535 Shahanshahi), 29–31.
31. Ibid., 31–32.
32. See also Mobed Firuz Azargoshasp, "The Testimony of Faith of Zoroastrians," *Pandarha* (2, 4 2499), 29–31.
33. Mobed Rostam Shahzadi, "Lecture Concerning the Celebration of the Life of Zoroaster," *Hukht* (14, 2, 1342.), 13–20; 45.
34. "A'ineh," *Pandarha* (2, 4, 2499), 22–23.
35. Ibid.; *Pandarha* (2, 7, 2499), 22–24; and *Pandarha* (2, 8, 2499), 22–23.
36. Here he cites Yasna 32, line 12.
37. Mobed Rostam Shahzadi, "Answers to Religious Questions," *Mahnameh-ye Zartoshtian* (Nowruz 2535 Shahanshahi), 41–42.
38. "A'ineh" *Pandarha* (2, 5, 2499), 22.
39. Morvarid Giv was the wife of Anjoman President and philanthropist Rostam Giv, and the daughter of Ardeshir Mehraban.
40. "Morvarid Khanum Giv, One of the Most Notable Women of Our Community," *Pandarha* (2, 8, 2499), 28–29.
41. *Mahnameh-ye Zartoshtian* (Nowruz 2535 Shahanshahi), 26.
42. *Hukht* (14, 5 1342), 18–20.
43. The Zoroastrian Anjoman of Tehran sent literature about Zoroastrianism but refused to sanction the conversion. Mobed Shahmardan performed the initiation rite. The converts, to assuage the fears of the Anjoman, called themselves the lesser-known name of Mazdiyasna, rather than Zoroastrians. See Amighi, *Zoroastrians of Iran*, 230.
44. Amighi, *Zoroastrians of Iran*, 286. These spouses were Christians, not Muslims.
45. Ibid., 241.

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